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Philip Kemble, esq.
1825.

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MEMOIRS

OF

THE LIFE

OF

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE, Esq.

INCLUDING

A HISTORY OF THE STAGE,

FROM THE TIME OF GARRICK TO THE PRESENT PERIOD.

BY JAMES BOADEN, Esq.

" Nihil metûs in vultu: gratia oris supererat.
" Bonum virum facilè crederes, magnum libenter."
TACIT. *in v. Agric.*

" This was the *noblest* Roman of them all!" SHAKSP.

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

Philadelphia:
PUBLISHED BY ROBERT H. SMALL,
AND
WILDER & CAMPBELL, NEW-YORK,
William Brown, Printer.
1825.

TO THE

KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

SIRE,

YOUR MAJESTY'S favour to the subject of these memoirs has extended beyond his existence; even to the gracious acceptance of a very humble effort to do justice to his memory.

YOUR MAJESTY distinguished in Mr. Kemble, the scientific artist, the illustrator of our greatest poet, the improver of scenic representation, the scholar of elegant manners, the man of unblemished integrity and honour.

Such were the qualities which, to all *sound* dramatic taste, pointed out Mr. Kemble as the consummate director of our most liberal amusement. But it is not for me to pursue this theme, on which the HIGHEST JUDGMENT has long since pronounced.

In the admired exercise of his abilities as a manager and an actor, Mr. Kemble became involved in a calamity, which threatened him with irretrievable ruin;—I mean the destruction by FIRE of Covent Garden theatre. He had reached at this time a period of his life, which could not flatter him with hopes of any *very* lengthened continuance of his exertions.

But at this moment of very severe affliction, the Royal Mind condescended to administer that PRINCELY CONSOLATION, which was dear indeed to a spirit such as his; and the accompanying mark of the ROYAL MUNIFICENCE became doubly precious to him, from the GRACIOUS LANGUAGE, by which its acceptance was rendered not merely a duty, but a PRIDE.

To the end of his highly-honoured life, the INTEREST which he had excited suffered no diminution; and YOUR MAJESTY has deigned to express your royal satisfaction, "that a permanent record of that life was in contemplation."

For *myself*, so greatly favoured on this occasion, should YOUR MAJESTY indulgently consider what follows, as a *faithful* portrait of Mr. KEMBLE, and a *not* uninteresting view of the BRITISH STAGE, I shall indeed rejoice in a design, to which I owe this public expression of the veneration inspired by YOUR MAJESTY'S goodness, and of that sense of duty and attachment with which I must ever be,

SIRE,

Your Majesty's

Most devoted subject, and

Most grateful servant,

JAMES BOADEN.

Jan. 1, 1825.

INTRODUCTION.

I was occupied by an endeavour to ascertain the genuine portraits of our immortal Shakspeare, when I heard with infinite concern of the death of Mr. Kemble. I noticed that event in the following terms : and I quote them here, that the reader may be aware of the engagement I then contracted, and decide how far, by the present work, my pledge to the public is redeemed.

"While these sheets are passing through the press, I am shocked and grieved with the intelligence, that my excellent friend had departed this life, at an age that allowed a reasonable hope of many years of honourable retirement. At no very distant period, I hope to deliver to the public a work, the object of which is to record his progress in the art which he professed; and also to display his personal character, as it unfolded itself during an intimacy of near thirty years. Fortunately, the materials before me are at once abundant and authentic. It is my design to pay equal attention to the splendid talents of his sister, Mrs. Siddons : I cannot at all hope to do justice to the one, without embracing the other in my theatrical picture; and even then the work would be imperfect, did it not notice the concurring, though not equal, merits of those who acted with these great performers during their ample professional course."*

* Note at pp. 17, 18. of Inquiry into the Authenticity, &c.

I have blended the LIFE OF MR. KEMBLE with the *History of the Stage*, because they throw light upon each other; and I know not how they could well be separated.—What he *advised* was always referable to some system of management:—what he *acted* was always to be compared with the performances of others; either aided by their skill, or injured by their want of it. I have therefore exhibited him as the central figure of my group; as the "observed of all observers;" as the great artist of his time, as accomplished in theory as practice:—as one, in a word, whose countenance, figure, and gestures enabled him to convey what a mind of great *reflection*, and studies of infinite *accuracy*, pointed out as the true objects of the tragedian.

In the almost childish season of life, I imbibed that fondness for the stage, which, shall I say, *compelled* me to attend to it with constancy and passion;—it constituted my *sole* amusement and principal *expense*—I studied, as though I had been to make it a profession. As I grew in years, I became known to a few of its most eminent professors. I had always good taste enough to look beyond professional skill in the choice of a *friend;* my prudence or my good fortune never associated me with one actor, whom I could not sincerely esteem as a man. I owe, therefore, to the profession, in public and in private, many of the most rational as well as most pleasing hours of my existence. When, at length, I ventured upon the stage as an *author*, I found the greatest kindness and support from the performers of three different theatres; and I hope that their merits have been properly estimated in the present work. That I shall satisfy ALL who may have survived to read me, I cannot promise to myself; but I am quite sure of my *intention* to be just; and they may easily appease any ungratified portion of self-love, by imagining their critic "walking, or talking, or perhaps upon a journey," or (an *old* critical enormity,) that "peradventure he *slept*, and could not be awaked."

That Mr. Kemble chose to distinguish me by parti-

cular confidence and long friendship, I have always felt to be an *honour* to my name. I hope not entirely to discredit his choice. This detail about myself would be inexcusable, but that it shows the *position* of him who has taken upon him to observe ; and that I have not ventured to record, what I had not every opportunity to know, to see, and to examine.

It was to fill up the chasm of a few years in stage history, that I extended my design up to the time when we lost Mr. Garrick ; and I thus offer to the public a dramatic record from the death of his great predecessor to that of Mr. Kemble in the year 1823.

There are fortunately many very masterly efforts of the pencil, by which the person and expression of Mr. Garrick may be distinctly known. In private life there is the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, resting upon the hands clasped together ; composing, what in truth he could do with surpassing airiness and point—a *prologue.* It should be *re-engraved,* for the worn-out mezzotinto, common enough among the dealers, is detestable. But the ' infinite variety' of this great actor may be seen, at its highest and lowest points of expression, in the tremendous whole length of his *Richard the Third,* by Dance, and the equally perfect portrait of his *Abel Drugger* by Zoffanij. Mr. Reynolds has now completed his engravings of these invaluable works, and I congratulate the public upon their perfection.

Dr. Johnson, in his Life of Smith, among the English poets, with the tenderness that such a recent loss excited, did all perhaps for his fame that was just *then* required, and should not have waited the entreaty of Mrs. Garrick to do more.—The Life of Garrick, by Johnson, would have been a treasure.

> " Love is not love,
> When it is mingled with *respects,* that stand
> Aloof from the entire point."

That stroke of death, " which eclipsed the gaiety of nations," occured on the 20th of January, 1779.

But "the public stock of harmless pleasure" was first impoverished by his retirement from the stage: he had some consolation in the opening career of Sheridan, who, like another Congreve, seemed destined to raise our comic style to its former character. Garrick attended the rehearsals of the School for Scandal, and openly announced the brilliant diction of the play; with something of reasonable regret, that like his great model, the writer should have less nature than wit.

This first mention of Mr. Sheridan is a temptation to step a little back, for the object of noticing the succession of his dramatic efforts. His success was so *prodigious*, that one must have personally known Mr. Sheridan, to be able to conceive how he could so suddenly abandon a course of equal profit and fame, for another to which his nature seemed unsuited, and whose very elements were to be acquired during the exercise of his talents in the science. But as a politician, I have only to record, that his early efforts were discouraged by William Woodfall; a man who stood equally divided, like himself, between the senate and the play-house; equally competent to *report*, at least, his triumphs upon either scene. He told him, that he would never be an orator—"It was the greatest mistake," said my old friend, "that I ever made."

The *Rivals* was the first comedy by R. B. Sheridan, and acted at Covent Garden theatre on the 17th January, 1775. The play was rather roughly treated by the audience, and the author gratefully ascribed its ultimate triumph to the judgment and the friendship of Mr. Harris. If he was sincere in his declaration, no subsequent change of scene should have led him to rescind the printed acknowledgment. On the 21st of November, in the same year, he produced his *Duenna*. He seems then to have abated something of his speed of composition; for not being yet ready with his School for Scandal, he brought out at Drury Lane an alteration of Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, on the 24th February, 1777, and followed it on the 8th of May by that brilliant effu-

sion, which placed the *School for Scandal* before the Plain Dealer, which suggested it, and surpassed in *stage effect*, while it at least equalled in *wit*, the Double Dealer of Congreve.

The plan of the School for Scandal was said to have been derived from a MS. piece by a young lady, which was found in the presented stores of Drury Lane house. To grace the improbable by the *pathetic*, this prodigy of scenic invention died of a consumption at Bristol, and was the daughter of a merchant in Thames Street. Genius is superior to locality. Don Quixote was written in a prison, and the *Araucana* of Ercilla amid the often hasty marches, and insecure encampments of an army. But here there was known and acknowledged power in minds of the highest character—difficulty might even be friendly to production, as the flame bursts fiercer forth the more it is compressed. My youth was passed in the midst of the mercantile world, but we certainly never heard of this wonder of the river Thames—for I look upon the invention of the *screen*-scene* in the School for Scandal as without a parallel in the drama.

A slight hint for such a situation might, however, be conceived, from Fielding's novel of Tom Jones; in which the fall of a rug in the private apartment of Molly Seagrim, discovers the moral philosopher, Square, in a position very ill suited to the "eternal fitness of things." The probability of such a recollection is strengthened by the certainty that the Charles and Jo-

* A friend of mine told me that, on this memorable evening, he was passing hastily through the passage of the Rose Tavern, in front of Garrick's Theatre, when, on a sudden, he heard a *roar* or *shout* beyond what he thought any scenic triumph could excite—more like to the exulting enjoyment in Milton of the whole Philistian multitude, when Samson was performing for their amusement feats exceeding human. It was excited by the *falling* of this screen in the 4th Act. What I myself heard, afterwards, was still beyond any sound I had witnessed previously in the theatre—though the *Duenna* excited very hearty merriment. It has only one little spot of incongruity in its management—*Joseph* should say nothing about his "opposite neighbour and her *anxious* temper," when he is afterwards to place the very person, for whose concealment he draws the screen, between *that* and the *window*. The line too has no inference from it, and may therefore properly be omitted—and the direction to the servant stand thus. "Stay, stay; draw that screen before the window—that will do."

seph Surface of the play, are but portraits modernised of the profligate but generous Jones, and the decorous hypocrite Blifil.

There is *absolute* proof that he found *some* aid in the genius of his own family. In the *Rivals* Falkland rushes into Julia's dressing-room, tells her that he has killed his adversary, that his life is forfeited, that he wishes first to call her *his*, and then that, without preparation, she would fly the country with him.—Rivals, Act. V. Sc. 1.

In the Memoirs of Sidney Biddulph, written by his excellent mother, the hero, a *Falkland*, too, observe—enters to the heroine in the same perturbed state—tells the same distracted story, and urges the same sacrifice from the lady. In the romance the story is true, in the play it is merely feigned to try the constancy of Julia. Compare the third volume of the novel from p. 240, of the second edition, printed 1761.

In the same volume, at page 102, the reader will see Warner trying the dispositions of his two cousins, as a *poor relation;* prepared by immense wealth to reward the liberal indigence of the one, and confound the arrogance and inhumanity of the other. Here is *certainly* the Sir Oliver Surface of the School for Scandal, who, in the disguise of old Stanley, sounds the hearts of his two nephews, with the same ability to reward and punish.

If, after all, it cannot be credited, that the great writer of *dialogue* should also possess the knowledge of *structure*, but that he must only embellish the edifices reared by other hands—(and for such an hypothesis a better reason may be found in his indolence, than can be inferred from his powers,) I should then consider it more likely, that so much *stage* effect was the actual property of the author of the *Discovery*, with all the experience of old Sheridan to aid her;—THAT she might once have really dramatised incidents from her own romance; and thus have left among the family papers two, perhaps weak, comedies, for her son to embellish by his *wit*, as he afterwards graced the Stranger

and Pizarro by his energy and pathos. Something more may be found in aid of this supposition—the *ingenuity* of her Nourjahad will not easily be paralleled.

The other productions of the stage between the death of Mr. Garrick and the arrival of Mr. Kemble in the metropolis, are but few in number.—I mean those of any lasting merit. Mrs. Cowley took firm possession of the town by her luxuriant farce called *Who's the Dupe?* acted the first time on the 10th of April, 1779; and as her fancy had great fertility, the following February saw her *Belle's Stratagem* ranking with the happiest efforts of her sex.

Poor Reddish, on the 5th of May, had a benefit, and it was resolved to try whether he could not go through the character of Posthumus. He was now infirm, and upon the fund; in common occurrences imbecile, but to be excited by his former profession, or by nothing. That amiable *spectre* of Poet's Corner, the late John Ireland, gave an affecting detail of this attempt. He met his friend on this important evening an hour before the performance began. Reddish entered the room with the step of an idiot, his eye wandering, and his whole countenance vacant. Mr. Ireland congratulated him, that he was sufficiently recovered to perform his favourite Posthumus. "Yes," said he, "and in the *garden scene* I shall astonish you." "The garden scene, Mr. Reddish! I thought you were to play Posthumus?" "No, Sir, I play Romeo." His friend assured him, that Posthumus was the part he was to act—and he walked to the theatre, reciting *Romeo* all the way.

When dressed for Posthumus, and in the green-room, it was still hard to undeceive him—at length he was pushed upon the stage, to take the chance of former habits recovering him to the proper business of the night. Mr. Ireland, in anxious expectation, got close to the orchestra, and had a perfect view of his face. The instant he came in sight of the audience, his recollection seemed to return; his countenance resumed meaning,

his eye became lighted up, he made the modest bow of respect, and played the scene as well as he had ever done. But *Romeo* again met him the Green-room, and it was only the stage cue that had the power to unsettle this delusion; and *that* never failed to do it through the whole play. Mr. Ireland thought him, on this occasion, less assuming and more natural than he had seemed in the full enjoyment of his reason.

Dr. Kenrick, the foul asperser of Mr. Garrick, did not long survive him; he died on the 10th of June, 1779. Dr. Johnson had the honour to be persecuted by him on many occasions—he assailed his Dictionary, and his Shakspeare. But his petulance was greater than his power; and his cotemporaries smiled when they read in the attack, "that Dr. Johnson's *name* was much better known than the *merit* of his writings." Kenrick was not without talent, and accordingly gave, what is now seldom done by translators, a readable version of two foreign works—the Eloisa and Emilius of Rousseau. As a dramatic writer, he has, in *Falstaff's Wedding*, shown a respectable power of imitation; a rather intimate perception of Shakspeare's art of displaying character by a crowd of congenial images—if I dare use the term, a redundancy of wit.

The principle of association leads me here to notice another death connected with the works of Shakspeare—that of Mr. Edward Capell, one of his best editors. He was a man of laborious diligence, and perverse pedantry:—what he meant to say was commonly right; but his expression was often obscure, and always affected:—he published the poet's works unaccompanied by his notes; accurately pointed and tastefully printed.

Dr. Farmer and Capell at one time seemed to be closely united in the study of Shakspeare; but Steevens had given "medicines" to the master of Emanuel, and he soon after whistled off our *haggard* note-writer, "and let him down the wind to prey at fortune." But in the edition of Steevens, I think I sometimes discern a note

of *Capell*, through the medium of translation. He died in possession of that amusing office, *deputy licenser* of plays, on the 24th of February, 1781.

The 10th of May of that year witnessed the first performance of Macklin's *Man of the World*. It was indeed an agony for a man of ninety to stand before the audience as the author and actor of Sir Pertinax Mac Sycophant. The opposition was commensurate with the bitterness of the *satire;* but the veteran stood his ground, and the insidious artifices of success are now *taught*, while they are derided, from the stage.

As to the professors themselves, there is no great variety of incidents to attract us. In Sept. 1779, Mr. Henderson and Miss Younge left Drury Lane Theatre for that of Covent Garden; and on the 26th of May, 1780, Mrs. Green, the original Duenna, quitted the stage in Mrs. Hardcastle.

But it is every way worthy of record, that, in the month of September, 1782, Tom King became the manager of Drury Lane Theatre, and as a cause or consequence of his management, that amazing tragedian, Mrs. Siddons, returned to the London stage on the 10th of October, after an absence of six years. And thus the few links are supplied which unite in stage history the death of Mr. Garrick with the appearance in town of Mr. Kemble the year following.

It will not be unamusing to the reader to have the actual condition of our theatres in former times brought authentically under his immediate inspection. He has heard of Spranger Barry, of the grace and beauty of his figure, and the soul-subduing qualities of his voice. Judging of past things by the present, he will frame to himself no very mean notion of the theatre itself, which such an actor, in the capital of the sister island, enriched by his performances and those of Mrs. Barry. By the great kindness of an old friend of Mr. Kemble's, he will find, among the illustrations at the end of the present volume, an exact inventory of all the rare and *not* precious moveables, which were passed over to Mr. Ryder in the year 1776, with the theatre in Crow-street,

the lease of which he will also now be enabled to peruse. The inventory will occasionally provoke a smile;—the lease will excite his astonishment, at the prodigious growth of the theatrical passion in Dublin. He will see Mr. Barry's theatre let at a rent of 450*l.* per annum, with two additional payments of 165*l.* to the subscribers and 188*l.* ground rent.—As an aid towards which, the government gave 120*l.* for four plays bespoke within the year.

He may then be told that upon Jones's refusal to come to terms as to the Crow-street house, it has been shut up these four seasons, and is now a mass of ruins: that Mr. Henry Harris, the patentee of Covent Garden Theatre, who is master of the revels in Ireland, obtained a renewal of the patent for 21 years to Jones, which had expired; that he purchased a building intended for the Dublin society in Hawkins-street, which cost 70,000*l.*, the altering and furnishing of which cost him 50,000*l.* more; and that such theatre is now let by him to Mr. Abbot, for seven years, at a yearly rent of FOUR THOUSAND POUNDS, and that the lessee has every reason to expect a very handsome *residue*, after fully satisfying his landlord! Surely, after such a fact, want of stage encouragement will not be deemed a feature of the Irish capital. The size of the theatre will be known, when I say that it holds 520*l.*, at 5*s.* for the boxes, and 3*s.* for the pit.

Nor is this disparity in the furnishng of the ancient and modern stages peculiar to Dublin. The memory of no very aged persons may present, if closely urged, some not very brilliant impressions of the miserable pairs of flats that used to clap together on even the stage trodden by Mr. Garrick; architecture without selection or propriety; a hall, a castle, or a chamber; or a cut wood of which all the verdure seemed to have been washed away. Unquestionably all the truth, all the uniformity, all the splendour and the retinue of the stage came in, but did not die, with Mr. Kemble. He provoked a demand, that will now constantly be made—he

kindled a taste that may rest safely upon *his* measure for its indulgence, but which I hazard nothing in saying no power but some national calamity will ever extinguish.

To prove with what perfect truth this fame is attributed to Mr. Kemble, and to HIM alone, the reader will find in the present volume Mr. King, upon throwing up the management, to which Mr. Kemble succeeded, using these strong and very significant expressions: "I had not even the liberty to command the *cleaning* of a coat, or adding, by way of decoration, a yard of *copper lace;* both of which, it must be allowed, were *often much wanted.*"—p. 228.

It was only necessary for me to show that Mr. Kemble introduced these improvements at Drury Lane; because it necessarily followed that the rival theatre would be compelled into an adoption of similar propriety and splendour.

What remains for me to state in this introduction, is the pride I have in remembering the aid which I have received. I found that Mr. Kemble was *indeed* beloved by his friends, and that their zeal for his honour led them to anticipate my inquiries. The efforts of my own immediate FRIENDS may be best answered by private acknowledgment; they were made to serve and oblige ME: but there are OTHERS, whom it would defraud, to withdraw from them an expression of thanks, as public as the advantages derived through their kindness to the present work. Such, for instance, as the present Alderman WILSON, of York, and a Dublin correspondent, whose name even is unknown to me—but whose record of Mr. Kemble, in the sister island, was of infinite use in the early period of the Life. As I owe this communication to the gentleman just named, he will be pleased to spare no scanty portion from my full measure of acknowledgment to *himself*, and honour me by conveying it to his friend. To EDWARD FITZ-SIMONS, Esq. of Sandymount, Dublin, my best thanks are due for the liberality, which imparted to me some most valuable documents relative to Barry's Theatre: and the good-

ness which left me to use his bounty at my own discretion.

Although I have long reckoned Mr. Charles Kemble in the number of my *private* friends, yet, as a public man, it is fit he should be known for that affectionate brother, which Mr. Kemble *merited* for his heir. He came to me, with infinite candour and solicitude; open to all my inquiries, and communicative even of private correspondence. My late friend's letters to him, upon some interesting events of his life, are, if I mistake not, entitled to general admiration.

To myself the present work has given nothing but pleasure. I wrote it with the best likeness of my ever respected friend before me, and, therefore, as in his presence, describe him as he was.—On some few, a very few points, in the exercise of, I hope, a sound discretion, I have ventured to baffle the search of the malignant. It has sometimes happened to HIM, as to others, to utter, in convivial moments, incorrect opinions of persons and events: where I have subsequently found his *deliberate* and *settled* opinions in opposition to such *transient* notions, I have not told that he ever spoke *lightly* of any one; because I am sure, even the person touched by it could not feel more pain in the attack, than Mr. Kemble did upon mature consideration of its injustice.

Perhaps Cicero, when alluding to his great Roman predecessor, may best exhibit Mr. Kemble: and the following terms need no other change, or modification, than the insertion of the Briton for the Roman actor.

"He was such an ARTIST, as to seem the only one, fit to come upon the stage; yet such a MAN, as to seem the only one unfit, to come upon it at all. He had even more integrity than skill; more veracity than experience; and the whole people knew him to be a better man, than he was an actor; and while he made the first figure on the STAGE for his *art*, was worthy of the SENATE for his *virtue*."—Pro. Q. Roscio 6. 25.

J. B.

60, Warren-street, Fitzroy Square,
1st January, 1825.

CONTENTS.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary reflections. His birth. The author's recollections of his parents. His acting when a child. Play of Charles the First. Mr. Kemble never intended for the stage. His education. Notices of him at Douay. His studies. His memory. Original bent of mind. Gibbon. Kemble. Comes to England. First efforts. Bishop Warburton. - - - - - - - - - - - - - pp. 1—11

CHAP. II.

His York engagement. His writings for the stage. Orestes. His portrait by Stuart. Lord Percy's interference for Mr. Kemble. Mrs Mason in Zenobia. Miss Eleanora S., her behaviour and its perplexing consequences. Kemble's manliness. Sharp contest. Dr. Burgh, General St. Leger. General reflections on such annoyances. Lunatic asylum. Kemble's prologue. Mr. Inchbald's death. Mr. Kemble's fugitive pieces in 1780. Theatrical fete. Mr. Kemble's Irish engagement. Digges. Mrs. Crawford. Mrs. Siddons. Miss Philips and her champion. 12—28

CHAP. III.

Mr. Kemble arrives in town. State of our theatres as to talent. Drury-Lane. Smith. Fine gentleman in comedy. Change of manners. Its effects upon former comedies. John Palmer. Dodd. Bensley. King. Parsons. The Critic. Its first night. Moral sensitiveness of the audience. Sheridan an unexpected imitator of Dr. Barrow. The passages compared. - - - - - - - - - - - - 29—39

CHAP. IV.

Covent Garden. Lewis. Wroughton. F. Aickin. Quick. Edwin. Henderson. His analytic power exemplified in Sterne, in Falstaff. Sportive inventions in private Garrick and Dr. Johnson. The ode on Shakspeare. His readings. The impressions left upon the author's mind. The lead-

ing actresses. Miss Farren. Delicacy her great feature. Miss Pope. Mrs. Abington. Her *enjouement* on the stage. Mrs. Mattocks. Miss Younge. - - - - - - - - - - - - 40—50

CHAP. V.

Mr. Kemble's first appearance in London. Hamlet. Preeminence of the character. Cast of the play. Originality of his Hamlet. Compared with Garrick and Henderson. Mr. Steevens's petulance. Misstatement of a passage. Dr. Johnson with Mr. Kemble. The exclamation upon man. Points in Mr. Kemble's Hamlet continued. Hamlet's Ghost. Why he is drest in armour. Pneumatology of Shakspeare's age. Garrick's alteration of Hamlet. - - - - - - - - 51—65

CHAP. VI.

Mr. Kemble's range of parts at this period very limited. The Black Prince. His sister, Miss E. Kemble. Mrs. Siddons and her amazing exertions. Her original appearance in 1775. Mr. Siddons. The published acknowledgment of the great actress. Johnstone in Irish characters. The Yates's. Whimsical letter of Yates on newspaper hints. Return of Mrs. Crawford. Compared with Mrs. Siddons. Mr. Kemble in Richard III. Sir Giles Overreach. King John. The critics. Mr. Kemble's scene with Hubert. Mrs. Siddons in Constance. Her majestic sorrows. Beverly. The other theatre. Massinger's picture. More Ways Than One. Poor Soldier. State of our theatres. Mrs. Siddons in Lady Randolph. Its beauties. - - - - - - - - - 66—83

CHAP. VII.

Mrs. Abington. Her Lady Betty Modish. Lillo. Comedy of Reparation. Mrs. Cargill, lost in the packet, returning from India. Details of that event. Mrs. Siddons in the Countess of Salisbury. Hall Hartshorn, whether the real author of that play. Her next choice, Thomson's Sigismunda. The prologue to this play examined. Mrs. Siddons's performance of the heroine, its beauties. Exhibition of her portrait in the tragic muse. Mr. Kemble never sat to Sir Joshua Reynolds. Compared at that time with his sister. His habits and studies. Love of accuracy. Macnally's Robin Hood. Commemoration of Handel. Cowper's censure controverted. Ardour of Mrs. Siddons. Mrs. Abington. Lord Mansfield. Macklin. The great decision as to the rights of audience and actor. - - - - - - - - - - - - 84—97

CHAP. VIII.

Mr. Kemble's acting. Its peculiar character. The great and beautiful in art. Vulgar nature. Macbeth. Academic style. Melody. Familiar touches in diction. Sir Joshua Reynolds quoted in support of the author's opinions. Colman's season, 1784. Two to One. Mrs. Inchbald. Holcroft's Noble Peasant. Hayley's Lord Russel. Miss Kemble. George Steevens. Anecdote of Palmer in this play. Mr. Steevens's furious prejudice against Mrs. Siddons Hayley's want of delicacy and inconsistency exposed. Rhyming comedies. Peeping Tom. George Alexander Stevens. Mr. Kemble, in the recess, goes to Liverpool and Man-

chester. Mrs. Siddons at Edinburgh. Dublin. Cork. Her illness. Systematic attacks upon her. Younger and Mrs. Mattocks. Their triumph in Lear over Henderson and Mrs. Siddons. Travesty of the Beggar's Opera. - - - - - - - - - pp. 98—115

CHAP. IX.

Winter season of 1784-5. Return of Mr. King to Drury Lane Theatre. Sheridan. Mr. Kemble and the author in his library. Unread plays. Sheridan's habits. Mr. King and his address. Felt the public pulse as to Mrs. Siddons. Digges and Brereton. First appearance for the season of Mrs. Siddons. Addresses the audience. Her triumph. The true question considered. Provincial excursions. Views of the profession. Former times. Covent Garden. Holman. Fawcett and Morton. Macklin admires Holman. Dignum. His first appearance. Mrs. Siddons in the Carmelite. Cumberland's strange epilogue. Arthur and Emmeline. Mrs. Wells's imitation of the two great tragic actresses. Dr Johnson's death. His funeral. Beaumarchais' Figaro. That author's impudence. Cumberland's Natural Son. - - - - - - - - 116—133

CHAP. X.

Mr. Pope's Oroonoko. Massinger's Maid of Honour. Mrs. Siddons in Lady Macbeth. Smith in Macbeth. Packer in Duncan. George Steevens attacks the banquet scene. That play repeated by royal command. The king's notice of Henderson's Benedict. Imperfect once in this character. The Orphan. Holman's Hamlet. Henderson's readings at Freemason's Hall. Le Texier in Lisle-street. Compared with each other. Theatres resumed, Othello. Mr. Kemble in the Moor. His sister in Desdemona. Depreciated. Great excellence exemplified. They read to their majesties. Mr. Kemble for his benefit acts Macbeth. Critical dispute. Mason's Elfrida. Mrs. Siddons in that part. The original Tempest acted. Inadvertency of the poet. Mrs. Siddons acts Rosalind. Mrs. Bellamy. Her benefit. - - - - - - - - - 134—154

CHAP. XI.

Close of the season 1784-5. No production of any consequence. Brief display of dramatic talent in Sheridan. His reported new opera and comedy. Affectation as a subject. Destouches. Murphy. As to tragedy, nothing expected or desired. Jephson characterized. Our Dresses. Scenery. Mr. Kemble's revivals. Colman the younger. Turk and no Turk. Young Bannister. His talents. Private excellence. Kemble as a companion. Miss E. Kemble. Mrs. Inchbald's I'll Tell You What. Colman, senior. Gibbon. Author becomes known to Mr. Colman. Account of his manner. Miss Younge married to Mr. Pope. Miss Brunton. - - - - - - - - - - - 155—164

CHAP. XII.

Season of 1785-6. Drury Lane opens with Othello and Desdemona, by Kemble and Siddons. Miss Brunton in the Roman Father. Henderson's

great effect. His study. Mr Kemble's. Mrs. Jordan at Drury Lane. Sketch of her. How received Miss Brunton in Juliet. Mrs. Siddons in the Jubilee. Mrs. Jordan Imogen. Henderson's death. His Falstaff. That of some others. Leonidas Glover. Frederick Reynolds. His tragedy of Werter. Mrs. Siddons acts Mrs. Lovemore. Mrs. Clive dies. Garrick. Walpole. Burke's opinion of Garrick. Cobb's Strangers at Home. Mrs. Wells. Topham. Andrews. Omai. Drury Lane. Sheridan. Death of Reddish. Mrs. Jordan in the Trip to Scarborough. Burgoyne's Heiress. Mrs. Brown a rival to the Jordan. Mrs Abington in Scrub. Mrs. Billington's debût. Benefit for Henderson's widow. Murphy's prologue. The Distrest Mother. Racine. Mr. Fox. The Captives. Mrs. Siddons acts Portia on her brother's night, and Elwina in Percy. Mrs. Jordan in Hippolita. Miss Kemble married to Mr. Twiss. Retires from the stage. Mrs Siddons in Ophelia, and the lady in Comus. - - - - - - - - - - - - pp. 165—187

CHAP. XIII.

Haymarket. Mr. Colman attacked in the newspaper. His prologue. Mrs. Baddeley dies. Female Macbeath and Falstaff. Mrs. Brooks. Disbanded Officer. Mrs. Jordan at Edinburgh. Her verses. Winter season of 1786-7. Rival Richard Cœur de Lion. Ryder at Covent Garden. Death of Princess Amelia shuts the theatres. Presentiments of death. West Digges dies. Dodsley's Cleone. Lady of Fashion. Anecdote. Mrs. Cowley. Pilon. Miss Prue. Reynold's Eloisa. Mrs. Siddons in Imogen. Mr. Kemble's Posthumus. Its excellence. R. P. Knight. Such Things Are. Roxalana. Death of Brereton. Count of Narbonne. Seduction. Lady Restless. Jephson's Julia. Mr. Kelly. His powers. Mrs. Crouch. Society at her house. Mrs. Yates dies. Mrs. Siddons in Alicia. Poor Hewerdine. Professor Porson. His memory. Original Anecdote. - - - - - - - - 188—202

CHAP. XIV.

Summer of 1787. The Royalty Theatre. The question stated. Palmer before the magistrates Whimsical conduct. Colman's novelties. Inkle and Yarico. The Village Lawyer Winter season of 1787-8. Kemble alters the Pilgrim. Dryden's spleen. Mrs. Jordan. Marriage of Mr. Kemble to Mr. Brereton's widow. Excellence of that choice. Bannister. Mrs. Inchbald again. King and No King. King Lear by Mr. Kemble. Fate of Sparta. Criticism. Mrs. Cowley and Mr. Merry. Smith's last benefit. Greathead's Regent. Mrs. Piozzi's happy epilogue. Grimaldi. Lady Wallace. The Ton. Mrs. Abington. Beatrice. Animal Magnetism. Singular anecdote. Palmer returns from the East. Mrs. Jordan in Sir Harry Wildair. Mrs. Siddons in Cleopatra. Palmer amusing in Falstaff. Leoni, Master Braham. Mr. Smith's farewell. Garrick's more judicious. Old Sheridan. Colman's Ways and Means. Mr. Kemble's father acts in London. The School for Scandal in the Haymarket. - - - - - - - - - - - 203—226

BOOK THE SECOND.

FROM MR. KEMBLE'S BECOMING MANAGER OF DRURY LANE TO HIS RETIREMENT FROM THAT THEATRE.

CHAP. I.

Season of 1788-9. No arrangements settled at Drury Lane. Mr. King, his nondescript situation, discontent and flight. Addresses the public The proprietors conclude with Mr. Kemble. Short address also from him. Warren Hastings. Alarming indisposition of the King. Mr. Kemble's views. How supported. Acts Lord Townley. Improvements in Macbeth examined. The witches. Mrs. Crouch censured, perhaps idly. Mr. Kemble's great display of his art. His Leon. Sciolto. Mirabel. Romeo. Revives Henry VIII. Dr. Johnson. Siddons. Takes Cromwell, leaving Wolsey to Mr. Bensley. Hastings. The Pannel. Mrs Jordan. Zanga. Produces Coriolanus. - - - - - - pp. 227—240

CHAP. II.

Other novelties of Kemble's first season as manager. Mrs. Goodall in Rosalind. Mrs. Jordan also acts that character. Her Nell. Corinna. Lady Bell. Her foible. New pieces, Cumberland, Cobb, Mrs. Inchbald. The Prophet Rd. Bentley. O'Keefe. Aladdin. St. John's Mary Queen of Scots. General Conway. Richmond House theatricals. The King's recovery. The Queen's first drawing room. Author's tribute to her Majesty's excellence. She appears at Covent Garden Theatre. Mrs. Siddons in Juliet. Reynolds, his Dramatist. Mr. Macklin. The author's knowledge of him. Burning of the Opera House. Talents that had been displayed in it. Its visitors. Manchester theatre burnt Mr. Kemble, with Mr. Aickin, takes the Liverpool House. The opening prologue Mr. Kemble's tragedy. His Machiavel. Mrs. Inchbald's Married Man. Mr. Colman's Battle of Hexham. Pleasantry of the author. - - - - - - - - - - - - 241—258

CHAP. III.

Season of 1789-90. Mrs. Siddons absent. Mr. Kemble's resources. Covent Garden. The Author's friend, Harley. His talents. Kemble in Henry V. The Tempest. Purcel's music. Vanbrugh's False Friend. Mr. Kemble in the Libertine. The Iron Mask. King at Covent Garden. The Crusade. The Haunted Tower. Mrs. Behn's Rover. Quick in Richard. Summer theatre. Palmer's return. Winter season of 1790-1. Duke of Cumberland's death. Disinterment of the supposed remains of the great Milton. Enquiry into the fact. Mr. Kemble's conviction on that subject - - - - - - 259—271

CHAP. IV.

Season of 1790-1. Mrs. Esten, her fine talents. Mr. King replaced at Drury Lane, by Mr. Kemble. Death of Edwin. Grimace. Mr. Kem-

ble acts Charles Surface. Mr. Munden's first appearance. Mrs. Siddons reengaged. Siege of Belgrade. School for Arrogance. Death of Beard. Sketch of him. Pantheon Opera. Bate Dudley. His Woodman. O'Keefe. Merry. Wild Oats. Old Drury finally condemned. Account of her last moments. Old and modern theatres compared. The Hon. F. North's Kentish Barons. Next Door Neighbours. Colman's Surrender of Calais. - - - - - - - pp. 272—283

CHAP. V.

Winter season of 1791-2. Mr. Fawcett at Covent Garden. Mr. Charles Kemble. Drury Lane removed to the Haymarket. New prices. Prelude. Oscar and Malvina, by Byrne. Reynolds's Notoriety. Mrs. Billington. Ryder dies. Day in Turkey. Lady Mary Wortley Montague. Warburton's singularity as to her letters. Mrs. Jordan. Public opinion. Her apology. Mr. Kemble's difficulties. Cymon revived Huniades. Mrs. Siddons acts Queen Elizabeth in Richard III. Mr. Kemble forced into a duel by Mr. J. Aickin. Road to Ruin. Richardson's comedy of the Fugitive. Jealous Wife. Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. Drury Italianized. P. Hoare's Dido. Little theatre. Mrs. Whitelock. Mrs. Sheridan's death. Mrs. Bannister retires. - - - - 284—296

CHAP. VI.

Holland's new Covent Garden Theatre. Riot at the new prices. The Pirates. Morton's play of Columbus. Morton and Reynolds compared together Kemble highly dissatisfied with Sheridan. Power of that great man. Murder of the French monarch. Kemble and his sister at Colman's. Every One Has His Fault. Mrs Jordan. Anna. Forced on Mr. Kemble. The author's own debût. The Prize. Murphy's sisters particularly examined out of respect to him. Murphy's figure. Mr. Kemble's prologue for his play. False Colours. Armourer. How to Grow Rich. Mrs. Jordan's Lady Restless. Mrs. Gibbs. London Hermit. Mr. Kemble's Octavian. Its picturesque power. Great effects in it. Settlement with the manager. - - - - - 297—312

CHAP. VII.

Mrs. Radcliffe's Romance of the Forest. Mr. Boaden dramatises it. How to dress a ghost. Mr. Harris's reception of the play and its author. New Drury. Mr. Kemble's taste in scenery. Mr. Capon selected. His knowledge and unwearied pains. Mr. Kemble's perfect collection of the drama. Drury at Colman's in the winter of 1793-4. Morton's Children in the Wood. Miss Poole's Ophelia. Hamlet drest à la Vandyke at Covent Garden. The pictures in the play. Munden in Polonius. Mr. Kemble in Young Marlow. Bannister, jun. Bold Stroke for a Wife. Richard Tickell. Mrs Webb dies. Miss Leake. Dreadful accident at Colman's. Novelties. The grand national theatre opened. The Author's Fontainville Forest. Ludicrous night rehearsal of it. Remonstrates with Mr. Harris. New effect. Drury opens for plays with Macbeth. Banishment of Banquo's Ghost. Mr. Charles Kemble in Malcolm. Prologue and epilogue. The Jew by Cumberland. Bannister. Bishop Watson's opinion of Cumberland as a logician. Mr. Pye. Mr. H. Siddons. Lodoiska done by Mr. Kemble. Glorious first of June.

Summer season. Palmer in Octavian. Death of the elder Colman. - - - - - - - - - - - - pp. 313—332

CHAP. VIII.

Mr. Harris restores a one shilling gallery. Holcroft's prelude. Mrs. Davenport. Reynolds, the Rage. Mr. Kemble acts Publius. Baddeley's death. Mrs. Robinson. Her comedy of Nobody. Author's acquaintance with that lady. Variety of new pieces. Mr. Kemble revives All's Well that Ends Well, and Measure for Measure. Death of the admirable Parsons. Mr. Kemble, with D'Egville for his ballet-master, gives the splendid progress of Alexander the Great. Mr. Kemble's particular attention to the Wheel of Fortune. Novosielski dies. First Love. Mr. Boaden's Secret Tribunal. Want of helmets. Zorinski. Mrs. S. Kemble. The Knights. Miss Mansell. Cumberland's hurry. Reynolds's speculation succeeds. Mr. Kemble acts Alexander. Cooper fails in Macbeth. Days of Yore. Holcroft's Man in Ten Thousand. Morton's Way to Get Married. Novelties. Iron Chest. - - 333—348

CHAP. IX.

Mr. Kemble in Vortigern. Shakspeare papers. Some naturally expected. At length stated to be discovered. Terms as to Vortigern. Mr. Kemble's opinion. Sheridan's. Ireland's hand-bill. Vortigern, how cast. Speech in it. Consequences. Candid remark as to the author. Lord Southampton's autograph. - - - - - - - - 349—356

CHAP. X.

Consequences of the failure to Mr. Kemble. Miss Lee's Almeyda. Mahmound. Kirk's cruelties. Mr. Bensley retires from the stage. Mrs. Kemble also. Colman's. Elliston acts Octavian, preparatory to Sir Edward Mortimer. Preface to the Iron Chest. Death of Dodd. No true successor to him. Lamash. Difficulties in Drury. Mr. Kemble throws up the management. Mr. Pitt, a glance at him. Elliston at Covent Garden. Mademoiselle Parissot. Dowton. Thomson's Edward and Eleonora Alcestis. Fortune's Fool. Jephson. Holman. Holcroft. Force of Ridicule. Miss Farren. Arnold. Cure for the Heart Ache. Mrs. Pope's death. Garrick and that actress. Miss Farren's marriage. Reynolds goes to Drury Lane. Garrick's monument. - 357—369

CHAP. XI.

Losses of the stage. Old Macklin dies. Heir at Law. Character of Fawcett. Mr. Boaden's Italian Monk Palmer perfect. Miss De Camp in Rosalba. Mrs. Litchfield. Mrs. Abington. Happy prologue for her by Colman. Miss Farren, how succeeded. Cheap Living. Mrs. Crawford. Monk Lewis. Castle Spectre. Mr. Kemble in that play. Morton's Secrets Worth Knowing. Colman's Bluebeard. The Stranger. Mr. Kemble. Mrs. Haller. Character dissected. Perfection of Kemble in the Stranger. Novelties. Blue Devils. French fable. Le Texier. Cambro Britons. Palmer farewell to the author. His death. Benefits for his children. - - - - - - - - - 370—383

CHAP. XII.

Winter season of 1798-9. Mr. Kemble opens with the Stranger. Emery comes from York. Kotzebue. Lovers' Vows. Ramah Droog. Novelties. Reynolds returns to Covent Garden. Laugh When You Can. Aurelio and Miranda. The author's account of it. Kemble most kind as well as excellent. Holman, Votary of Wealth. Feudal Times. Mr. Morris. Kotzebue's Birth Day. Mr. Kemble in Montval. Pizarro, done by Sheridan himself. The strange prologue. Sheridan's feelings during its performance. Kemble in Rolla. Mrs. Jordan. Mrs. Siddons. Elvira considered. Success of the play. Political feelings. Mr. Pitt. Play printed. Colman's. Novelties there. Fête at Frogmore. Reflections. - - - - - - - - - - - - pp. 384—396

CHAP. XIII.

Season of 1799-1800. More decorations. Management. Turnpike Gate. The Wise Man of the East. The East Indian. Mr. Kemble acts in it. Other novelties. Modern drama founded on moral paradox. Fatal tendency. Speed The Plough. Miss Baillie. De Montfort. Mr. Kemble. Prince Hoare. Seduction. Liberal Opinions. Attempt upon the King's life, described. His majesty's firmness. The Assassin His trial. Considerations. Death of George Steevens. Character of him by Hayley. Sketch of him by the Author. Colman's. - 397—409

CHAP. XIV.

Season of 1800-1801. Kemble desirous to purchase, reassumes the management. Mrs. Montagu. Kemble's remark. That lady's wisdom. Dr. Moncey. Marbles. Condescension. Cato in Lybia. The Soldiers. Blanchard. Mrs. S. Kemble. Virginia. George Cooke at Covent Garden, characterized. His Richard criticised. Compared with Kemble. Life, by Reynolds. Antonio fails. Cooke's Kitely. Mr Kemble's Lear. Letters. King John. Poor Gentleman. Cymbeline. Deaf and Dumb. La Perouse. Cooke's Sir Giles. Adelmorn. Cooke's conduct. - - - - - - - - - - - - 410—425

CHAP. XV.

Season of 1801-2. The great rivals. Cooke disappoints the public. Mrs. Billington at both theatres. Henry Siddons. Escapes. Cooke's audit. Mrs. Billington's illness. Reynolds. Folly as it Flies Browne. Mrs. Litchfield. Kemble's Zanga. His request. Braham in the manly robe. Henry V. A riot quelled by the military. R Palmer Falstaff. Alfonso. Urania. The Cabinet. The dillettanti. Mr Kemble announces the Duke of Bedford's death. The Winter's Tale. Cooke's Sir Pertinax. Strawberry Hill comedy Mr King's retirement. Honours paid to him. Close of the season. Mr. Kemble quits Drury Lane. Theatrical property. Some clamour against him and his family. Novelties at Colman's. - - - - - - - - - - - - 426—440

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAP. I.

Season of 1802-3. John Bannister stage-manager. Mr. Graham and his board. Dwyer. Cooke's Hamlet. Correct text, how important. Collins. S. Kemble in Falstaff. Lewis suddenly struck with apoplexy. Delays and Blunders Tale of Mystery. Melo-drama, what. A House to be Sold. Mrs. Litchfield. Pope in Kemble's characters. Family Quarrels. The Jews. Mrs. Siddons disturbed in Ireland Dublin Lying-in Hospital. Her letter to F. E. Jones. Holcroft's Hear Both Sides. Capt. Caulfield's Hamlet. Ranger. Dimond's Hero of the North. Colman's John Bull. Its merits. A monodrame. Death of Mr Richardson. Singular conduct of Sheridan. Mrs. Pope, the second, dies. Summer theatre. Charles Matthews. Mrs. Wiggins. Allingham. Colman's epilogue to the Maid of Bristol. Astley's amphitheatre again burnt. - - - - - - - - - - - - pp. 441—456

CHAP. II.

Weekly salaries in Mr. Kemble's last year at Drury Lane. Mr. Kemble negotiates, through Mrs. Inchbald, with Mr. Harris. Sets out on his travels. His letter from Paris. Description. French theatre. Friends there. Lord Egremont. Lord Holland. Talma. Napoleon's hat. Madrid. La Tyranna. Letter from Mr. Kemble while at Madrid. His account of that capital. Its population. Its buildings. Their theatres. La Rita Luna. A bull fight. How he was accommodated Censures of his countrymen. His own correct feeling. The death of old Mr Kemble. His son's letter on that event. Filial piety. Mrs. Kemble, his mother. His wife's affection and cheerfulness. How his father's remains should be distinguished. Advice to his brother Charles. Returns to England Duties of a stage-manager. Mr. William Lewis. His daily habits. Peculiar opinions. Once a proprietor. Schism in the theatre. Mrs Lewis alarmed. Relinquishes his sixth share of Covent Garden. Mr. Kemble purchases. Value of the property, and distribution of it. Improvement of the house. - - - - 457—470

CHAP. III.

The author's explanation. Notice of the change in the Covent Garden management. Feelings of the comic writers. Dinner given by Mr. Kemble. His first appearance at Covent Garden. Revivals. Pizarro transferred. Raising the Wind. The Caravan. The Dog. English Fleet. Elliston and his benefit. His copious address. Miss Duncan. Blind Bargain. Kemble's kindness to its author. Tobin. Peculiar fate of Mr. Kemble. Master Betty. Sketch of him. Hough. Belfast. Edinburgh and Mr. Jackson. Home, the author of Douglas. Macready. Roscius in town. Immense crowd. How he appeared. Critically examined. His houses the first season. Decline of his influence. Mania cured, and how. - - - - - - - - - - 471—488

CHAP. IV.

Colman's theatre. Poor Suett. The Village. Fracas. Elliston and Matthews. The former compared to Achilles. How an audience should be addressed. Dowton. The Tailors. Death. Retreat of the ten thousand. Masters of the order. Winter of 1805-6. Zanga. Gloster. Rowe really does imitate Shakspeare in Shore. Proofs in abundance. Betty's return Receipts contrasted. Mr. Hargrave. Betty in Brobdignag. Season of 1806-7. The triumph of Coriolanus. Thomson. Siddons. Insult, how noticed by Kemble. Theodore Hooke. Tekeli. Mother Goose. Isaac Reed. Tobin's Curfew. Letter to the author from Mr. Kemble. Noel Desenfans, esq. - - - pp. 489—504

CHAP. V.

Charles Young. His first Hamlet. Rights of the winter patentees defined. In law. in equity. Their danger. Their errors. The stage. Mrs. H. Johnston's return. Violent clamour Discussion Charles Kemble's Wanderer. Miss Smith. Her intelligence. Begone Dull Care. The World. The comedy of Errors. Retirement Miss Pope. Her merits. Inimitable burlesque of tragedy. Storace. Mrs. Mattocks. Both quit the profession. The steadiness of Cooke. The miserable conflagration of the theatre. - - - - - 505—518

CHAP. VI.

The Covent Garden performers take refuge in the Haymarket. The Exile. Raising of the new theatre. Foundation laid by the Prince of Wales. The dinner. Mr Kemble. The late duke of Northumberland. The destruction by fire also of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Proceedings of the parties concerned. - - - - - 519—531

CHAP. VII.

Building of the new theatre. Its exterior. Remarks. Interior. Threatened storm as to new prices. The O. P. Riot. The dinner. The stage. Termination of the contest. - - - - - 532—548

CHAP. VIII.

A miscellaneous chapter. Pronunciation. Aches, Mr. Kemble's own defence of that dissyllable. Passage in Macbeth. His notion as to emphasis. Roman character. Mr. Kemble particularly devoted to its three finest displays, Coriolanus, Brutus, and Cato. The Author's view of the Cato. Mr. Kemble mentally and personally considered, to show the radical differences between Mr. Garrick and himself. The sportive exuberances of the one. The reserve of the other as to mimicry. How courted by the great. His reception at Carleton House - 549—559

CHAP. IX.

Situation of the Covent Garden Theatre. Reconciliation dinner. More persecution. Lewis punishes the Liverpool rioters. Cooke shipt off to America. The horses. Julius Cæsar. H. Tooke. Malone. Retirement of Mrs. Siddons. A poetical address. New Drury opened. Lord Byron's verses. Mr. Kemble leaves Covent Garden for a time. His return and honours. French tributes. Mr. Kean. His opening. How aided. Miss O'Neill. Anecdote. Death of Mr. Sheridan. Mr. Kemble takes leaves of the stage. At Edinburgh and in London. Deputation from Drury Lane. Public dinner. Goes to the south of France. His letter to his brother. Mr. Harris dies. Mr. Kemble divests himself of his share in Covent Garden. Negotiation for his old plays. Sale of his books and prints. Visits Italy. Return, and death. His servant Rousham. Conclusion. - - - - - - - - pp. 560—587

ILLUSTRATIONS REFERRED TO IN THE INTRODUCTION. - 589—602

MR. KEMBLE'S LAST WILL. - - - - - - - - 603

THE LIFE

OF

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE, Esq.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary reflections.—His birth.—The Author's recollection of his parents.—His acting when a child.—Play of Charles the First.—Mr. Kemble never intended for the stage.—His education.—Notices of him at Douay.—His studies.—His memory.—Original bent of mind.—Gibbon.—Kemble.—Comes to England.—First efforts.—Bishop Warburton.

The biography of an actor is the record of his art. To endeavour after any other fame than excellence in his profession, will be injurious rather than salutary, and probably unsuccessful. The studies connected with his art are fully sufficient to occupy his leisure hours, and to divide attention is certainly to weaken it. The less notice the actor excites off the stage, the better for himself and the public.

The dramatic soil is by no means the natural seed-plot of the virtues; on the contrary, I feel that the actor is surrounded by infinite temptations, and may, therefore, fairly be allowed a somewhat "larger tether" than can be given to other men. And, accordingly, when we find him combine with professional genius the quiet duties of private life; when we know him to be as much respected for his virtues as followed for his talents, he reflects part of his fame upon the community of which he is the ornament, The great tragedian, whose progress I have undertaken to record, was a striking example of the happy combination alluded to. No man was more beloved for his private merits, as no one

could be more admired for exalted powers. His reputation as a man passed beyond the circle of his friendships, and became a sort of public property; and frequently, indeed, in his professional life, has that character interposed itself as a shield to protect him against the rash and groundless hostility levelled at him as an actor or a manager.

At first sight one would imagine, that the vast importance of such an union of public with private worth was too obvious to need inculcation. For, let us look to the sure consequences which follow the neglect of it. If, inflated by success upon the stage, the young performer commence a life of pleasure or profligacy; if he mix with the dissolute great or the tasteless vulgar, he will not long retain the desire or the power to cultivate his art. He will be contented with his first thoughts, and his judgment will never ripen: he will pall by unvaried repetition, and grow careless when he excites but faint applause. His manager will naturally estimate him by his attraction, and his salary will decline; his scale of living must be contracted, and his associates will drop off. Commencing his career with popularity, he will close it in neglect; and, if remembered, will be classed with those at whom good men look grave and prudent men shake the head, and whose celebrity is confined to a circle drawn by the magic hand of intemperance.

As the life I am about to write will show an unvaried aspiration after the best fame, so I have premised the few reflections above, as a warning to those who affect or feel an indifference for its possession.

John Philip Kemble was born on the first of February, 1757, at Prescot in Lancashire. His father, Mr. Roger Kemble, was manager of a provincial company, performing in Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, &c. &c. His mother, whose maiden name was Ward, was the daughter of that actor and manager, who, in the year 1746, on the 9th day of September, gave a benefit play in the town-hall of Stratford-upon-Avon, for the purpose of restoring the monument of Shakspeare in the church there.* The play was Othello; and he spoke himself a prologue written expressly for the occasion by the Rev. Joseph Greene. A few

* Mr. Ward had been a performer in the time of Betterton, and in 1723 was the original Hazeroth in Fenton's Mariamne. On the 25th April, 1760, at Dublin, the celebrated Woffington made her first appearance in Sir Harry Wildair for his benefit.

years after this, Mr. Ward's daughter, by giving birth to Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble, did infinitely more for the fame of our great dramatic poet.

As in the course of our friendship he took an opportunity of introducing me to his father and mother, the reader who loved Kemble may thank me here for the impression made by the persons and minds of those from whom he sprung. It will readily be conceived that children, so remarkable for dignity of form and expression of countenance, did not proceed from parents deficient in both. Indeed those qualities were merely transmitted.

I only knew them in their decline of life, and although certainly not surprised, yet I can safely say that I never was more struck than by the sight of his venerable parents. His father had the same style of head as his own, except that the features were more delicately finished, and somewhat less energetic. But his countenance excited reverence beyond any that I have seen; to which the silver curls of his hair contributed, and the sweet composed and placid character of his deportment.

He was sitting in his son's library, and from a peculiar costume that he had adopted from liability to take cold, (a partial silk covering for the head,) he looked to me rather like a dignitary of the church two centuries back, than a layman of the present age. Our introduction to each other was at once simple and expressive. "This, sir, is my father." And to the old gentleman, "Allow me to present to you my friend, Mr. Boaden." He received me with the benignity suitable to his age, and addressed himself to me occasionally in a way that confirmed my first impression at entering the room.*

His mother had been a distinguished beauty in her youth, and had once been tempted by a coronet. What remained of her was of the highest order. She had very uncommon vivacity and point in her conversation. As I sat next to her at dinner, I had full opportunity to remark and enjoy the soundness of her judgment and the peculiar energy of her expressions. I should fancy, among her own sex, that she must have been deemed, like Dr. Johnson, a tremendous converser. Her husband being a catholic, led her to the subject of religious toleration, on which she spoke with

* I have been all my life particularly observant of the manners of men at table. I have never yet seen greater ease nor higher polish than were exhibited by Mr. Kemble's father. This opinion of mine was accidentally confirmed the other day by a friend, who is himself commonly deemed one of the best bred men in Europe.

great feeling and propriety. She was pleased to find that I could cordially esteem one who was sincere in the profession of opinions different from my own. On the subject of modish affectation, I even yet recollect the poignant severity of her language. Her utterance was, like that of Mrs. Siddons, deliberate, careful in enunciation; and her diction had a nervous and exact propriety, such as we have all admired in her son.

I remember, too, that in the course of the afternoon the old gentleman, less animated than his wife, had receded to the fireside; and she took the opportunity to speak to me, aside, of his merits as an actor. He did not hear our conversation, and she finished a pretty extensive range of dramatic characters by a touch of valuable discrimination. "There sits, unconscious of our remarks, the only *gentleman* Falstaff that I have ever seen." I may incidentally observe that, among our artists, Falstaff is exhibited as a low and beastly buffoon; they forget that, though he is Jack with his familiars, he is Sir John with all Europe. It is in this very point of gentility that Mr. Fuseli's picture of him differs from every other.

The reputation of their children may render these slight sketches of the parents of some value. They seemed to feel for their son the greatest esteem as well as affection; and his manner of addressing THEM was a model of filial deference and consideration. I never beheld a family group more interesting; and he no doubt designed to oblige me highly, when he that day took me home with him, without a formal invitation.

Mr. Kemble, while yet a child, performed in his father's company. In all probability he represented the little prating York in Richard the Third, while his sister might assume the character of Prince Edward; for it appears by a play bill dated the 12th of February 1767, that he played at Worcester the part of the Duke of York, afterwards James the Second, in Havard's pathetic tragedy of Charles the First. His sister, Mrs. Siddons, personated that glorious creature the Princess Elizabeth, to whom her dying father commended his last farewell to the Queen, her mother, together with the assurances of his inviolable fidelity and affection. The vulgar assassins of that day had, it is said, formed the gracious design of placing her as an appprentice to a button maker, but the sufferings of her family sunk so deeply into her tender mind, that their malice was disappointed.

"She died, a most rare child! of melancholy."

Although this tragedy has long been laid aside in our theatres, it was once extremely popular. A few months before Mr. Kemble made his first appearance in the York company, Cummins, his great rival, acted the character of King Charles at Hull; and the curtain had no sooner fallen upon the catastrophe, than a very amiable young lady, the daughter of an officer whose name was Terrot, dropt down dead instantaneously in her box. There was no doubt at the time that this disaster was caused by too severe a sympathy in the distresses of the scene. Such a circumstance enveloped the tragedy in a sort of superstitious horror; and for a long while the company could not venture to repeat it.

Mr. Kemble, the father, never intended the stage as a profession for any of his children; and accordingly, after receiving the first elements of education at a preparatory school at Worcester, his son John was sent to the Roman Catholic seminary of Sedgeley Park, in Staffordshire. The exigences of the company might require the early aid of his children, but if he originally designed them for other professions, it was injudicious to subject them, at the time of life when impressions are the keenest, to the glitter of the stage and the delight of popular applause. However destined, they all, we know, at some period of their lives, made attempts upon the stage, though with various success. Of some I can truly say, that they were but respectable in the art, to which pretty general opinion, no doubt, the transcendent excellence of the others itself greatly contributed.

At Sedgeley Park Kemble certainly distinguished himself. He had great application and diligence, and his proficiency was so decided, that it was determined he should complete his studies in the course prescribed by his religion: and he was accordingly, at the usual period, removed to the English college at Douay, to qualify him, at all events, for one of the learned professions.

I have heard the system of tuition at Douay highly commended by a cotemporary there of Mr. Kemble's, and he himself always spoke with admiration and gratitude of the professors who had directed his studies. He mentioned the facility he formerly possessed of Latin declamation, and I remember spontaneously evinced that he had by no means lost the power, by addressing, for some minutes, an imaginary assembly, in the language of his own Brutus. In recapitulating his Greek studies, he assured me that his early impression from some of the writings of the Stagyrite had never been weakened; and that he thought the intellect of

that philosopher superior to all competition. We were speaking of the Ethics and the Art of Poetry; and the conversation arose out of an examination he had been making of the admired translation of the latter by Mr. Twining. Our poetic versions of the Greek tragedians were not close enough to satisfy him.

He pointed in his library to a voluminous work of Alban Butler's, "The Lives of the Saints," which he told me he once knew thoroughly, whatever might be his present studies; and that the writings of the fathers of the church were familiar to him. He evidently, at that time, studied for divinity. But, amid the classical or sacred pursuits of his college, he kept up an ardent love for the literature of his country; and, as a reciter from our great poets, he had, at Douay, the reputation which through life he constantly maintained, of being one of the most harmonious speakers of English versification.

I once heard, from unquestionable authority, a pleasing trait of Kemble's mind, during his residence at Douay. His class, for some indiscretions, had fallen under severe censure of the masters; and with a view to vicarious atonement, an imposition was proposed of two books of Homer, to be gotten by heart. Kemble modestly, but immediately, volunteered to accept the task; and by close application, and his uncommon memory, enabled himself to remove the censure, by accurately repeating at least 1500 lines. The gallantry of the act could not but endear him to his class, and acquire for him the esteem and strong attention of the masters.

Of this college, perhaps, my readers may wish some brief account. It originated in the desire formed by certain English exiles to live together in some establishment, in which they might pursue their studies, and also propagate their religious opinions. William Allen, formerly of Oxford, and a dignitary of the church in Queen Mary's reign, in the year 1568, persuaded several persons, educated at both our universities, to unite themselves for this purpose. Morgan Phillips, who had been Provost of Oriel and Allen's tutor, was the first to subscribe for the purchase of a house. Pope Gregory XIII. increased their slender revenues to 1500*l.* a year, a sufficient fund, it was thought, for a community of sixty persons.

They were occasionally, from the troubles excited against them, transferred to Rheims, but returned again at calmer seasons to Douay. The chief management of the concern was in the hands of Dr. Lewis, who had procured very considerable benefactions towards defraying the expenses of

furniture; and, as a mark of honour, he was himself allowed to nominate a president. He appointed Dr. Maurice Church, who was a bishop elect in Mary's time, but that reverend person held the appointment only a single year, when the government of the college was transferred to the jesuits. That learned body built up for Douay, as for every other seat of their residence, a high reputation for learning and discipline, which was, since their superintendance, not suffered to decline.

I am in course disposed to speak in commendation of a college from which Kemble derived such essential benefits; and I know not how to render them superior honour, to that which they acquired by their reply to the three queries put to them in 1789, by the Catholics of England,

They denied that the Pope or the cardinals, or even the church, derived from God any civil authority in the kingdom of England.

They equally denied the mischievous power to absolve the subjects of a temporal prince from their allegiance.

Upon the monstrous doctrine, that no faith was to be kept with Heretics, though under the sanction of an oath, they solemnly declared, that there was no principle in their religion that warranted such a conclusion; that it was the unanimous doctrine of the Catholics, that the respect due to the name of God requires that the oath be inviolably kept, to whomsoever it is pledged, whether Catholic, Heretic, or Infidel. That these are the doctrines constantly taught in their schools, and maintained in their theses.

The document, at length, may be found in Mr. C. Butler's Historical Memoirs of the Catholics, and is dated from Douay, 5th January, 1789. The same excellent writer has given a character of Alban Butler's work, noticed above, which, as much valued by Mr. Kemble, I shall here insert.

"The erudition, the beauty of the style, the true spirit of "religion, and the mild and conciliating language, which "pervade the work, edified all its readers; disposed them to "be pleased with a religion in which they saw so much vir- "tue; allayed their prejudices against its professors; and "led them to consider the general body with good will."

Mr. Gibbon characterises it thus:—"A work of merit— "the sense and learning belong to the author—his prejudices "are those of his profession."—*Decline and Fall.*

But the sarcasm of the philosopher was, perhaps, sharpened by the recollection of his own penance as an apostate.

Mr. Gibbon has said, with respect to original bent of the mind to some one pursuit, that HE felt a strong and uncon-

querable tendency to become an historian. Mr. Kemble considered himself destined to be an actor. At all times have I heard him testify this preference; and at some, when what he saw in the profession would have led many to regret that they had ever yielded to the temptation.

To England however he came, resolved to make a public appearance upon the stage. With his father's great experience, it is not astonishing that he should be displeased at a determination, which put an end to the more sober wishes he had formed for his advancement. He may be allowed to feel some mortification at his son's choice, for what was then to assure him of the great and lasting eminence which he attained? The son, however, having determined on his course, soon began the practice of his art. His first performance in England was on the 8th January, 1776. He acted the character of Theodosius, in the tragedy so called; and his debut was witnessed by the inhabitants of Wolverhampton. He was never, I think, calculated to make much impression upon an uncultivated assembly. His voice was not remarkably powerful, and to the graces of refined elocution his audience had not been accustomed.

Our youthful hero was probably attracted to the *Force of Love*, by the speeches of ardent passion it contains, where Lee is the rival of Otway. All my female readers remember the often-quoted passage in the second act, beginning with this soft effusion :—

> "No more of this, no more; for I disdain
> All pomp when thou art by. Far be the noise
> Of kings and courts from us, whose gentle souls
> Our kinder stars have steer'd another way."

But the graver critic may consider and compare the following description of night, in the second scene of the fifth act, with that celebrated one by Dryden, and whatever else of the kind English poetry can supply.

> *Var.*—"'Tis night, dead night, and weary nature lies
> So fast, as if she never were to rise:
> No breath of wind now whispers thro' the trees;
> No noise at land, no murmur in the seas;
> Lean wolves forget to howl at night's pale noon;
> No wakeful dogs bark at the silent moon,
> Nor bay the ghosts that glide with horror by,
> To view the caverns where their bodies lie;
> The ravens perch, and no presages give,
> Nor to the window of the dying cleave;
> The owls forget to scream; no midnight sound
> Calls drowsy echo from the hollow ground;
> In vaults the walking fires extinguish'd lie;
> The stars, heav'n's sentry, wink, and seem to die."

The power of the poet is felt, in these succeeding images of silence, to invade us with a creeping horror, which acquires at length a full possession of the breast, and "our nerves are in their infancy again." A nice ear may object to the occurrence of the same rhymes; and the ideas may be deemed too common and appropriated; but the sensible effect of the lines is what I have stated.

The audience of Wolverhampton preferred his Bajazet to his Theodosius.

During this unsettled period of his life, the industry of his biographers has associated with the name of Kemble some of the long established anecdotes of the profession; making one ruffle do double duty, and other simple expedients, attributed to every country actor in succession. Some writers make him pay his landlady, by spinning a top violently over the head of her sick husband—an act of such unfeeling barbarity as no pecuniary distress could extenuate—and this, too, is told of a man who was exemplary for the tender regard he showed to the feelings of others. One writer brings to this stock of common stage properties, a banquet, that Kemble and his travelling companion took the liberty of making, of apples and pears, in a gentleman's orchard near Gloucester. They seem to have borrowed their notions of biography from Master Slender, who, after assuring Mistress Anne Page that "he *had* a FATHER," requests his uncle, Mr. Justice Shallow, to tell Mrs. Anne the jest, how his father "stole two geese out of a pen."

It is moreover told, too that this period of indolence and sordid distress lasted several years. To be sure, it is at the same time said, that he was born in 1757, came over to England from Douay when he was nineteen, and we find him a steady performer of the York company in 1778. The indolence, too, had produced some dramatic pieces, subsequently played at Liverpool, and York, and Edinburgh; lectures upon oratory, sacred and profane; and we may add, a study of his profession as an actor, which few have ever so deeply made. But every thing must give way to the desire of showing, that the excellence, which now cannot be denied, was once doubtful or unpossessed. Writers would shudder, if some deity were to display to them the malignity they shroud under the veil of narrative impartiality.

But all his time, it seems, was not to pass in indigence or contempt. One of his admirers, probably in recompense for the crude banquet in the orchard, gives him a flight as high as the episcopal palace of Gloucester, and seats him at the table of Bishop Warburton. The genius of that editor of

Shakspeare led him to bold experiments upon the text, and to interpretations of mere household words, by which a latent and profound meaning was extracted, that nobody but himself ever suspected to be there. It may be inferred that Warburton, when admiring the *new readings* of Kemble, was but applauding a kindred taste. He is said to have allayed the fervour of his commendations by a sober admonition to his guest, who is stated to have swallowed at table repeated draughts of ale: "Young man, they who drink ale *think* "ale." If the readings were acute, the caution had more point than pertinence. But the writer of the anecdote might have found, on a little reflection, that the occurrence was impossible.

In the discourse by his friend Hurd, printed in quarto, 1794, by way of general preface to the bishop's works, at page 108, is the following interesting account of his latter years; and they embrace the only period during which Kemble could have been introduced to Warburton.

"The last years of the bishop's life were clouded with mis-
"fortune as well as indisposition. He had for some time been
"so sensible of his declining health, that he read little and
"wrote less. But in the course of the year 1776, the loss of
"a favourite son and only child, who died of a consumption
"in his eighteenth year, when every hope was springing up
"in the breast of a fond parent, to make amends, as it were,
"for his want of actual enjoyment,—this sudden affliction,
"I say, oppressed him to that degree, as to put an end to his
"literary labours, and even amusements, at once. From that
"disastrous moment he lived on, indeed, for two or three
"years; but when he had settled his affairs, as was proper,
"upon this great change in his family, he took no concern in
"the ordinary occurrences of life, and grew so indifferent to
"every thing, that even his books and writings seemed, thence-
"forth, to be utterly disregarded by him. Not that his me-
"mory and faculties, though very much impaired, were ever
"wholly disabled. I saw him so late as October, 1778,
"when I went into his diocess to confirm for him. On our
"first meeting before his family, he expressed his concern that
"I should take that journey, and put myself to so much trou-
"ble on his account. And, afterwards, he took occasion to
"say some pertinent and obliging things, which showed, not
"only his usual friendliness of temper, but the command he
"had of his attention. Nor was this all. The evening be-
"fore I left him, he desired the family to withdraw, and then
"entered into a confidential discourse with me on some pri-
"vate affairs which he had much at heart, with as much per-

"tinence and good sense as he could have done in any former "part of his life. Such was the power he had over his mind, "when roused to exert himself by some interesting occasion. "But this was an effort, which could not be sustained very "long. In less than half an hour the family returned, and "he relapsed into his usual forgetfulness and inattention."

It was of course in this season of parental agony, worldly indifference, abstraction from all amusements, failure of memory, inattention to associates, and incurable melancholy, that the anecdote supposes him to have welcomed an itinerant actor to his table, discussed with him his new readings in Hamlet, and to have sported the monitory dissuasions from indulging in too much ale.

Perhaps the reader may excuse me for having made the above extract fuller than the refutation of an idle tale required, as the whole passage is extremely striking, and closes the history of one of the first of men. Bishop Hurd had but little more to add to the above picture. Warburton expired at the palace in Gloucester, on the 7th of June, 1779, and was buried in his cathedral, at no great distance from the west door, and near to the grave of one of his predecessors, Bishop Benson.

Mr. Craddock was the person who was said to have introduced Kemble to Bishop Warburton, and he did interest himself greatly about the success of his young friend; but the actor in question never had the happiness, such he would indeed have thought it, to be presented to the author of the Divine Legation.

CHAP. II.

His York engagement.—His writings for the stage.—Orestes.—His portrait by Stuart.—Lord Percy's interference for Mr. Kemble.—Mrs. Mason in Zenobia.—Miss Eleanora S. her behaviour and its perplexing consequences.—Kemble's manliness.—Sharp contest.—Dr. Burgh, General St. Leger.—General reflections on such annoyances.—Lunatic Asylum.—Kemble's prologue.—Mr. Inchbald's Death.—Mr. Kemble's fugitive pieces in 1780.—*Theatrical fete.—Mr. Kemble's Irish engagement.—Digges.—Mrs. Crawford.—Mrs. Siddons.—Miss Phillips and her champion.*

The provincial engagements of Mr. Kemble produced to him frequent mortification, and little of either profit or fame, with the exceptions of Manchester and Liverpool; in both of these towns he left a favourable impression, which has constantly been kept up by summer engagements; and he could name many persons of talent and consideration, who looked upon his ultimate triumph as a matter of absolute certainty.

It would not be my wish, if I had the means, to trace him through his severe pilgrimage among our country theatres; more particularly as I intend to give a pretty ample sketch of his progress, during the three years he continued in the York company. It was early in the October of 1778 that he joined them, then, and long, under the management of Tate Wilkinson.

Mrs. Siddons had experienced so much favour from the audiences of Yorkshire, that it seemed advisable for her brother to try the effect of claims, every way kindred. The company had just made the experiment of an additional week at Wakefield; as it did not answer, it is useless to detail the mortifications of the manager. I have mentioned it solely for the purpose of stating that Mr. Kemble made his first appearance in the character of Captain Plume, in Farquhar's lively comedy of the Recruiting Officer—with a pantomime.

But it was at Hull that he made the first appearance of any consequence; and there he played Macbeth on the 30th of October. There are no means of estimating how nearly then his performance approached to his maturer efforts; but I have strong reason to think that, to sound judges, the dawn sufficiently indicated what the day would prove.

To be sure, the eye, accustomed to all the splendour of our present theatres, may turn with apprehension to the deficiencies of provincial stages; and it may be conjectured that the actor was lost for want of our brilliant aids. But I doubt this extremely. I incline, from early recollections, to think, that, as the actors then occupied the whole attention, they had greater power over the spectator. If the scenery had decent propriety, it was sufficient; if the dresses were not old, the costume was little regarded.

In a country company, the more extensive an actor's powers are, the better for the concern. Although I should conceive that Mr. Kemble, even in his youth, could never have been wholly at ease in comedy, yet we find him following Macbeth by Archer, and becoming speedily an object of great importance to the manager.

To those who remember Mr. Kemble's latter diffidence, as an author, it may excite surprise that, on his just attaining manhood, he should venture before an audience a tragedy of his own composition. On the 29th of December, this year, he brought out his tragedy of Belisarius for his own benefit. As I have never seen a line of this play, I cannot speak to its merits: it appears to have been well received, to have been thought creditable to his talents, and to have acquired for him both money and reputation.

As I well know his extreme humility as to his writings, the real inducements to this exhibition must have been of a politic nature. He had felt that the report of his education was serviceable to him; it gave him consideration with those who had learning, and a little awed the decisions of those who had none. The more various the display he could make of his powers, therefore, the better. He had no rivals in the company as an author; it insinuated a suspicion, that he might *really* have none as an actor.

But at York it seemed there were difficulties to be surmounted. There was a good deal of prepossession to strive against—his rivals, it may be readily imagined, did not yield to him without a struggle; Cummins had long been the favourite with the MANY.

On the 19th of January, 1779, he acted on the York stage the character of Orestes, a part to which he was long attached; the scene where his imagination suggests to him the persecution of the Furies, was at all times one of his greatest efforts. The artist called American Stuart subsequently painted him in this character: it is a head, and conveys the incipient madness with perfect identity of expression. It affords a fine opportunity of ascertaining the change which

time brought upon his features, and is still, I believe, in the possession of his friend the Rev. C. Este. It might be compared with Sir Thomas Lawrence's portrait of him in Cato.

Mr. Kemble chose Ranger for his second performance at York.

It is a curious circumstance, that his early love of a more perfect exhibition of the drama should have been the fortunate cause of his intimacy with the late Duke of Northumberland. On the 22d February, 1779, that distinguished nobleman, then Lord Percy, arrived at York with two troops of the king's own dragoons. They remained in the town until the 26th of the following April. It occurred to Kemble, that a few soldiers might be rendered highly serviceable in the processions of the theatre, and he applied to the officer on duty for permission to employ them on such occasions. The officer, in his zeal for military discipline, told him that the men had more important duties to attend to. Mr. Kemble, however, was not easily induced at any time to give up a favourite object, and solicited the powerful interference of Lord Percy. His lordship condescended to interest himself about it, and the objection was immediately withdrawn.

On the 10th of April, the officers bespoke a play for the benefit of Mrs. Hunter. The play was the School for Lovers. To add a novelty to the attractions of the evening, Mr. Kemble presented to that lady a comedy which he had written, called the *Female Officer*. I presume the real soldiers to have been employed on this occasion.

After the performances of the evening, Lord Percy took Mr. Kemble home to sup with him. I learn from a most accurate and excellent friend of his through life, that Kemble did not then first become known to his lordship, though the favourable impression made upon the mind of that nobleman this night appears to have ripened into esteem, and ultimately suggested to him the desire that his son, the present duke, might receive the benefit of his instructions.

An Arabian proverb tells us, that "the habitation of danger is on the borders of security." I am now to relate a circumstance in his dramatic life, which led him to feel, very painfully indeed, the condition of an actor, among the proud, the thoughtless, the indelicate, and yet sometimes the leading parts of the community.

On the 13th of April, 1779, Murphy's tragedy of Zenobia was performed, and a Mrs. Mason was the heroine of the evening. The stage-box was unfortunately occupied by a lady of some distinction, whose ill-nature vented itself in the form of criticism; and Mrs. Mason became the object of her

derision, which she expressed by loud and ill-bred laughter, to the annoyance of the poor victim, and of every body but the persons in her immediate suite.

Mr. Kemble, too, because he perhaps could not *shout* like Cummins, or because he had a dark complexion; because he had the reputation of learning, or because the lady cared not about a reason when she wanted to amuse herself, he also became a mark for this silly woman's annoyance.

I do not suppose that she was aware of Dr. Johnson's opinion of Zenobia, that it had too much Tig. and Teri. in it (the names of two of the characters being Tigranes and Teribazus); but Mr. Kemble performed the part of the latter, who is the lover of the piece, and shared with Mrs. Mason the contempt and derision of Miss S. and her party. In the interesting scenes of the last act, she found full gratification for her spleen, as both her objects were together upon the stage, and she redoubled her efforts to cover them with disgrace. The actress had made little impression on any body, but Kemble was shocked at the brutal treatment she received. As to the insults designed for himself during the evening, he had retorted them by looks of infinite disdain. His sensibility was noticed in the box by loud and repeated peals of laughter from the lady and her echoes. At this, Kemble suddenly stopped, and being called upon by the audience to proceed, with great gravity and a pointed bow to the stage-box, he said "he was ready to proceed with the play as soon as THAT "lady had finished her conversation, which he perceived the "going on with the tragedy only interrupted."

The audience received this rudeness of the stage-box as an insolent attempt to control their amusements, and with shouts, which could not be laughed down, ordered the lady and her party out of the theatre.

That an actor, however, should presume to resent the conduct of a lady of family, was an outrage not to be endured; and some officers of the militia, at her desire, undertook to obtain a full and public reparation of the affront. They went round to the manager, and tried to alarm him on the side of his interest. He appears on this occasion to have done Kemble justice; to have urged to them his education, his talents, his spirit, and gentlemanly feeling; and to have shown how vain it would be to expect from him any submission where, in truth, HE was the injured person.

Mr. Kemble attended these gentlemen in the manager's room, and very coolly and temperately repeating his provocations, refused compliance with their demand. The officers returned to the lady, and reported their failure. The au-

dience in the mean time having made up their minds to support him, Kemble, upon their vehement call, coming on, was saluted with the words "No apology—No apology," from various parts of the theatre. The boxes, however, obtained him a hearing, and he proceeded to represent his grievance, and to touch with great feeling and propriety, in a vein of elocution not often heard from the stage, upon the mortifying circumstances to which his profession was subjected. This, as it little suited the purpose, so it probably passed the comprehension of some of his persecutors. They, therefore, in terms too vulgar to bear repetition, told him to put an end to his impertinent and impudent harangue, and ask pardon immediately.

Mr. Kemble on this, with the greatest firmness, and with some of that mingled astonishment and disdain, which he threw afterwards into Coriolanus, exclaimed "Pardon! ask "pardon! no, sirs,—NEVER;" and immediately quitted the stage, attended by the acclamations of the liberal part of the audience.

Attempts were renewed on the Saturday, when Mr. Kemble acted Douglas, in Miss Moore's play of Percy, to humble this intractable tragedian; and again on the following Thursday; when, after Macbeth, in which not Kemble but the manager performed the Thane, the offender acted the master in Dodsley's Toy-shop. His friend Dr. Burgh, a gentleman highly respected for his abilities, and General St. Leger, who was then fortunately at York, acted as mediators between the exasperated gentry who made a common cause against the comedian, and the indignant "Roman actor," who refused to compromise either his profession or his character.

All that Kemble could be made to yield was this: "Let "me be heard before I am condemned: if, when I have ex- "plained my conduct, any gentleman, or set of gentlemen, "will say, in that character, that I have acted unworthily, "I shall cheerfully make any reparation that they may "judge proper." To this there could be no *reasonable* objection, and he was heard. His fine address, his clear statement, his modesty and manliness, carried the cause, and contributed essentially to his progress in the public favour.

Miss Eleanora S———e was the daughter of a baronet, and her family is accurately known to me. However blamable her conduct on this occasion, I shall not more distinctly commemorate her folly.

A few years after, when this silly and offensive being read the success of Mr. Kemble in the metropolis; when she

found him honoured with the notice, even, of majesty, admired and followed by the first in rank and talent, how severely must she have smarted at the recollection of her malice or her bad taste, or both; and how vainly wished that on this unlucky night, at least, her petulance had annoyed only her domestic circle, or at farthest her select and fashionable acquaintance.

I hope the illiberality above recorded is fading fast away. In the metropolis the patrons of the theatre are mixed up with the public, and lost in the general mass: in the provinces they must be individually solicited on the part of manager and actor, and a greater distance is created between the artist and those by whom he lives. Benefit-plays, in particular, keep the servile dependence alive.

At first sight it might be thought that this matter could be easily arranged; that an actor took his talent, as every thing else is taken, to an open market, where the demand for the supply would always produce its exact value: but in provincial towns much previous reputation or local interest is needed to lift that talent into notice, or sustain it against prejudice.

In the wanton consequence of high station many a wound has been inflicted, which no time has healed. The derision of such a a person as Miss S. may have driven some feebler natures to despair. Kemble always knew his proper value. He had studied his profession accurately; had brought to it a mind well prepared, and an ardent love of the art. He had said at his outset that he would be the first actor of his time and manager of Drury-lane theatre, and he kept his word.

In May, 1779, Dr. Hunter patronized a play for the Lunatic Asylum at York. Mr. Kemble, at the doctor's desire, wrote an occasional prologue. He in the same month invoked his muse for the Leeds Infirmary, and his compositions had the praise that no criticism can take away, that of aiding the cause of charity, and mitigating the severest of human calamities. As I believe he never revised any of these early poems, but left them under final anathema, I shall quote from neither of them; indeed I mention them here only to show the opinion that then attached to him for cultivated understanding and poetic fancy,—and that any call of humanity or friendship upon his pen, was promptly and effectively obeyed.

The season at York closed with the Fair Penitent, in which Kemble was the Lothario to the Horatio of Cummins.

Mr. Kemble had greatly attached himself to the Inchbalds, then in the same company, and they were acting together at

Leeds in the June of 1779, when their society suffered a severe shock from the sudden death of Mr. Inchbald, which happened on Sunday, the 6th of that month. No man of his time could be more regretted. His talents were eminently useful to the company, and his probity and gentlemanly manners made him infinitely beloved by all with whom he was connected. His wife was the beautiful and most accomplished lady, who resided so long in the metropolis, whose dramatic efforts and whose novels have afforded to us all so much amusement, and whom her familiar friends were accustomed to designate as—the MUSE.

Mr. Inchbald had felt a slight indisposition, which his wife attributed to the day's heat, or a casual obstruction in the stomach. She had therefore recommended him to take some repose, and they had retired together, but he suddenly expired in her arms, and left her to mourn a loss, which she seems to have considered irreparable; for with all the captivations of beauty and mental powers, she never accepted a second husband. She, to be sure, needed no protector but her virtue, no other support than her talents.

For this lady Mr. Kemble always expressed the affection of a brother. Whether, as the wandering patentee insinuates, he ever felt the power of her beauty, and sued to her for acceptance, I know not. Stories of this nature are so easily invented, and the probable is so sure to be asserted as the true, that the event may be the safest guide. I rather think that, had Mr. Kemble proposed himself, he would not have been refused. Although Mr. Inchbald had given to his wife a profession, in which, notwithstanding her impediment, she was respectable, the rising fortunes of such a man as Kemble must have seemed no slight addition to the prospects of the widow. Prudence might have determined him to avoid any early engagement of this nature.

To the memory of his friend Inchbald he addressed a blank ode, in imitation of the admired one to evening, by the poet Collins. Its opening images have too close a similarity; but Kemble is clearer as to his sense, because less involved in the grammatical construction. Collins's seems to be an invocation without an object, or one utterly disproportioned to its elaborate introduction. He also composed the Latin inscription upon Mr. Inchbald's tomb at Leeds, to which he told me some objection had once been raised, as to the lineal disposition of the matter.*

* The following lines seem to remember that they were both Catholics.

"Procul este, invida superstitio,
"Et mala suadens religionis turbidus amor."

These poems are to be found in a very small collection of fugitive pieces, published at York in 1780. I have read a ridiculous story, that he was so hurt when he saw them in print, that he endeavoured to suppress them, and "at one fell swoop" destroyed 250 copies. This, by the way, was fifty more than the impression: 200 only were printed, and his publisher continued to sell these, quite unmolested by the author, down to the year 1803. I have his own authority for saying that, at that time, about a dozen copies remained in his hands, which Mr. Kemble begged of him, and upon receiving them he certainly put them, with much tranquillity, into the fire, a fate which, since then, invariably attended any straggling copy which he begged from a friend, and I believe even bought at any sale which contained it. In the year 1818 he found two or three copies still in York; he bought them at 1*l.* 11*s.* 6*d* each; and there I believe closed his fiery persecution of these fugitives.

The year 1780, however, was distinguished by an alteration of the Comedy of Errors, to which he gave the title of *Oh! 'tis impossible!* and here he revelled in whimsicality. The real humour of the two Dromios is in the spectators seeing *clearly* where the *dramatis personæ* mistake the men. Kemble contrived to puzzle the house as well as the stage, by making them *black* servants. Had this alteration been printed, I incline to think his maturer judgment would certainly have condemned the whole impression to the flames. Much may be pardoned to three-and-twenty; but when, of full age, such men as Davenant and Dryden could commit their horrible outrage upon the Tempest, and look complacently too upon the fertility of their inventions, the offence of Mr. Kemble may be dismissed with gentle rebuke. I mention it in the hope that it may tend to repress the rage for improving Shakspeare: in other words, holding out our feeble taper to the sun.

In this year also he ventured to occupy the public attention, alone, during a whole evening, and the following bill preserves the nature of the exhibition:

For this Night only,

An Attic Evening's Entertainment.

THEATRE, LEEDS.

On Monday Evening, June 24, 1780, at 7 o'clock,

MR. KEMBLE

Will deliver a Lecture on the Art of Speaking.

PART FIRST.

Sacred Eloquence,

Exemplified in St. Paul's Defence at the Tribunal of King Agrippa

PART SECOND.

Oratory of the Theatre,

Exemplified in the following Pieces.

Narrative.
Circassian.—*Kemble.*
Declamatory.
Hamlet's Instructions to the Players.
Hamlet's Soliloquy on Death.
Pathetic.
Maria, Lefevre, } *Sterne.*
Night, Elegy on Mr. Inchbald. } *Kemble.*
Ode to the Passions.—*Collins.*

On the 17th of August following he gave the good people of Leeds a second attic evening, with some alterations. In the division of Sacred Eloquence he then spoke an extract against Oaths, from St. John Chrysostom's fifteenth homily to the people of Antioch. And under that of the Pathetic, he delivered (omitting Lefevre) the Sword, and the Dead Ass, from Sterne, and a paper from the Adventurer.

In the following year we find Mrs. Inchbald accepting an engagement at Covent Garden Theatre.

The progress of Mr. Kemble in the public favour was great now indeed. He did not at all relax in his first efforts. He gave at York, in the January of 1781, the most distinguished of his performances, Hamlet; and also delivered a lecture on Public Speaking, which he had rendered extremely interesting by the beautiful examples he had selected of poetic and prose composition. Our odes he delivered with something of *stage* effect; he read more temperately the stories of Maria and Lafleur. At a later period he used to say "Reading should be *reading*." We shall find his talents as a lecturer remembered some time after by a distinguished nobleman, and originate an act of princely magnificence.

Tate Wilkinson has taken credit for introducing Massinger's Roman Actor to Kemble's acquaintance. It may be so; I shall not, at *that* time, dispute the manager's greater researches into our ancient drama. At all events he afforded our *English* actor an opportunity to deliver the splendid declamation of Paris, one of the most finished pieces of that peculiar master of oratory, Massinger.

Under the title of a Theatrical Fête were given, on the same evening,

The speeches of Brutus and Marc Antony, from Julius Cæsar;

The defence of the stage, from the Roman Actor;

The fourth act of Shakspeare's Henry IVth, first part;

And three acts of Dr. Young's tragedy of the Brothers.

Kemble, Cummins, and the manager, who was, of course, the king of the fête, rendered this *pasticcio* attractive, at York, at Hull, and at Edinburgh.

To this latter city he was led by Wilkinson's having hired the theatre from Mr. Ross in July 1781. There Mr. Kemble, among his range of characters, performed Puff, in the Critic. The close of his labours, as a constant member of the company, was however fast approaching; for, on the 31st of August, on their return to York, he concluded his engagement with the performance of Jaffier. Hitchcock, it seems, when he quitted Wilkinson himself, displayed to Kemble the splendid temptations of Dublin, and he had agreed, without any long delay, to pay a visit to the sister island.

I have given this detail of his engagement with the York company, because, in the first place, York has a sort of metropolitan dignity among our theatres; and, secondly, because it serves to mark the progressive advances of an actor destined ultimately to London. It makes the profession known with some distinctness; shows its temporary triumphs and its reverses, its sunshine and its shade. In the particular instance of Mr. Kemble, we find that much of the disesteem for the player was mitigated by considerations of a purely personal nature. It was known, that he had received a learned education and had acquired academic distinction—to gratify a ruling passion he had withdrawn from the honours of literature, and the high station to which literature may be expected to conduct.

Yet even this gentleman was so circumstanced, that it needed all his temper, his fortitude, and his eloquence, to avoid disgrace or dismission. As to the parts, which a country company required, or his own wish might lead him to sustain, I imagine a smile excited *now* by his performance of Archer and Ranger; but the reader may perhaps laugh out, when he is requested to conceive, in the same company, the effect of Mr. Fawcett's appearance in the characters of young Norval and Romeo. Yet let it be remembered, that

the *habits* of this valuable actor were then unfixed, and that he must always have had *spirit* and *feeling*.

At York, Mr. Kemble was courted by most of the considerable inhabitants. In literary characters the place did not abound; but he cultivated the friendship of Dr. Hunter, the excellent editor of Evelyn's Silva, and that of Dr. Burgh, author of the Scriptural Confutation of Lindsay, and editor of the posthumous pieces of poet Mason. Let me also commemorate the lasting intimacy he formed with the present alderman Wilson of that city, who has attended him through his brilliant career with sincere affection, and now laments the loss of his "matchless friend," with feelings that are a distinguished honour to his memory.

Mr. Kemble's Irish engagement was so far liberal on the part of Daly; he had five pounds a week, then the highest salary, and every facility was afforded to the display of his powers in tragedy. The theatre in Smock Alley opened in October 1781. Mr. Kemble's first appearance was in Hamlet, on the 2d November, and it certainly was much admired; his second performance, on the following night, was better attended than the first, and Daly seemed to feel the importance of his acquisition. But unluckily Daly made a point of Kemble's acting Sir George Touchwood in Mrs. Cowley's beautiful comedy of the Belle's Stratagem; and the audience who came to see the new actor suffered the disappointment produced by his acting a part totally unsuited to his powers. Hitchcock, however, prevailed upon Daly to get up Alexander the Great for the young tragedian, and it served to balance in some respects for the unpropitious exhibition in the comedy. The Irish, like the Scotch, are strongly national; and Jephson's Count of Narbonne, having succeeded in London, was got up in Dublin at both theatres. This play is taken from Walpole's romance, the Castle of Otranto, and it may be amusing to insert what he says, with all his Gothic predilections, upon Mr. Jephson's tragedy.

Berkley Square, Sunday morning,
November 18, 1781.

I HAVE been here again for three days, tending, and nursing, and waiting on Mr. Jephson's play. I have brought it into the world, was well delivered of it; it can stand on its own legs, and I am going back to my own quiet hill, never likely to have any thing more to do with theatres. Indeed it has seemed strange to me, who for these three or four years have not been so many times in a playhouse, nor knew six of the actors by sight, to be at two rehearsals behind the scenes, in

the green-room, and acquainted with half the company. The Count of Narbonne was played last night with great applause, and without a single murmur of disapprobation. Miss Younge has charmed me. She played with intelligence that was quite surprising. The applause to one of her speeches lasted a minute, and recommenced twice before the play could go on. I am sure you will be pleased with the conduct, and the easy beautiful language of the play; and struck with her acting.

To the Hon. H. S. Conway.

Mr. Kemble made a very strong impression in the Count. Daly himself acted Theodore,—Mitchell, Austin,—Mrs. Montague, the Countess,—and the Adelaide was Miss Francis, then unthought of, but who was to be the comic darling of her country, under the name of Mrs. Jordan. Jephson himself attended the rehearsals. Mr. Kemble burst upon the audience in the full blaze of his powers; from that moment his reputation was increased, or rather then decided. Captain Jephson was astonished and delighted. He took Mr. Kemble to his house, introduced him to Luke Gardiner, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, Mr. Tighe, Mr. Courtney, and others, his friends through life. That winter he added Sir Giles Overreach and Romeo to his Hamlet and Alexander, but the Count of Narbonne was the unrivalled attraction. The Irish did a two-fold justice in their partiality — the play by their countryman was beautifully written, and its principal character was acted in a very striking manner. Miss Younge, in the spring of 1782, went over to Dublin, and acted the Countess of course: she was in this character quite an enthusiast and extremely affecting. Her feelings seemed to be sublimed by piety. She endured the stern tyranny of her husband, with a graceful acquiescence and a gentle patience, that even added to her dignity. She appeared to have survived every passion but her maternal affection, and that sustained her to the end.

Mr. Kemble acted with Miss Younge, the Count to her Countess of Narbonne—Warwick to her Margaret—Hastings to her Shore—Jaffier to her Belvidera—and to his infinite satisfaction was relieved at length from Sir George Touchwood.

From Dublin he accompanied Miss Younge to Cork; there he opened, as he always preferred doing, in Hamlet, and repeated his usual characters with that lady. When she quitted Cork he performed several of his chief parts, among others the Earl of Essex. It could hardly be expected that

he should banish Barry and Mossop from their minds, and the people of Cork ventured to dispute the judgment of the capital.

The favourite characters of Mr. Kemble in Ireland were the Macbeth and Richard, the Hamlet and Orestes. With Mrs. Crawford he acted Glenalvon to her Lady Randolph, Biron to her Isabella, Horatio to her Calista, Edward to her Eleonora, Orestes to her Hermione.

He went with the company to Limerick during the assizes, and there was met and cordially greeted by several of his Dublin friends. In October 1782, the company returned to Dublin, and was strengthened by the addition of Digges. Mrs. Inchbald was also engaged for tragedy. Among the plays got up this season were "All for Love"—Antony, Kemble; Ventidius, Digges. "King Lear"—Lear, Digges; Edgar, Kemble. "Jane Shore"—Hastings, Kemble; Shore, Digges. "Cato"—Cato, Digges; Juba, Kemble. The "Fair Penitent"—Horatio, Kemble; Sciolto, Digges; Lothario, Daly. Daly now and then prevailed upon Mr. Kemble to strengthen his own performances in comedy. The rival theatre in Crow Street was falling to pieces fast. Ryder had left it—nothing was efficient there but Mrs. Crawford, who occasionally performed, to protract, at all events, the ruin that she could not avert.

Ryder, though a hard, was a useful actor; he performed Iago to Kemble's Othello, and strengthened the cast materially of all their plays. The Castle of Andalusia was immediately got up in Dublin, upon its great success in London, and a little flattened the reign of tragedy. But Mr. Kemble had now established himself with the Irish as an accomplished tragedian, and the fame of Mrs. Siddons's first season in London being the theme of all the higher circles, her brother's benefit was most profitably attended. The gentleman with whose recollections I am now gratifying the public, tells me he remembers dining with him at Capt. Jephson's, in the Castle, during the winter of 1782, in company with Lord Inchiquin, Mr. Tighe, Mr. Gardiner, and several ladies of distinction. After dinner his lordship gave as a toast "The matchless Mrs. Siddons," and drawing from his finger a ring, sent it on a salver to Mr. Kemble, desiring his opinion of the likeness. It was a miniature of Mrs. Siddons, set round with diamonds. Daly was not a man to whom the great popularity of Kemble could be agreeable. He, very injudiciously as a manager, frequently starved the cause, and got up his plays in a niggardly and unhandsome manner. But the unconquerable fortitude of Kemble struggled through all impediments,

and the engagement of Mrs. Siddons for the after season, procured even for him better treatment than he had before received, and secured to him the advantage of acting with her, Biron, Philotas, Jaffier, Hastings, &c.

The neighbourhood of learning is always friendly to taste. I have no doubt it is materially owing to the University and to Trinity College, that the inhabitants of Edinburgh and Dublin are among the most enlightened admirers of the drama. Upon the amazing success of Mrs. Siddons during her first season in London, Mr. Daly came over himself, and secured her in the summer of 1783 for Dublin. She declined, therefore, a number of offered engagements in this country, and signed with him an article to perform a limited number of nights, for which she was to receive 600*l.*: and accordingly she made her first appearance on the Dublin stage on the 20th of June, in the character of Isabella—her second character was Belvidera—her third, Jane Shore. I have said that there was a strong nationality there: it showed itself in the competition between herself and Mrs. Crawford. The latter lady, it will be remembered, had many claims upon the Irish feeling. She had been the wife of the greatest ornament of their stage, Spranger Barry, Esq., and had been associated with him, as the delightful heroine, who had aided him in his brilliant career. His loss had in a manner rendered her the depositary of all their affection, and very ardent it was; so that in Dublin, I believe, at that time, Mrs. Siddons but divided the crown with her.

From Dublin Mrs. Siddons went to Cork, and took Mr. Kemble with her; and it was, I incline to think, there that the engagement was negotiated for Drury Lane, which brought Mr. Kemble to the proper scene of abilities like his. Before I leave the subject of his performances in Ireland, I feel myself called upon to notice a subsequent imputation, that my friend had in a great degree formed himself upon Digges in tragedy. As I saw Mr. Digges in Caratach, and in Wolsey, in Cato, and in some other characters, so I have a most perfect remembrance of his style of acting. But, in honest truth, the gentlemen might as well have asserted that he formed himself upon the late George Cooke. Digges had, like Cooke, no grace in the management of his person; but he had a very bold and manly exterior, and touched occasionally the chords of pity with a master hand. That inimitable sketch of our native hero, in Fletcher's Bonduca, never has been filled up, but by Digges. His seasonable rebukes of the Queen, who put "too much wind to her sail"—his praise of the Romans, one of the finest things in our language—his

love of the youthful Hengo—his agony at his wretched fate: these were things to which Mr. Kemble could not be insensible; for he passionately loved fine acting, and scientific acting; and knew well the extent of Mr. Digges's powers. But he really only resembled him in the strong feeling they both had of genuine character, and sound composition.

In the Wolsey, something of Digges's pride of deportment might be fancied—but the great distinction was, that, though Digges more resembled the actual person of the cardinal, Kemble had more of the churchman in both the elevation and declension of that character. His piety was better mixed up with his pride in the one, and more strikingly supported him in the other.

Among the attractions of the Irish stage, in 1783, was to be numbered the late Mrs. Crouch, then the lovely and enchanting Miss Phillips, who, attended by her father, and recommended to Windham by Dr. Johnson, had gone over to try the success of her musical talents. Her beauty was the theme of every tongue; her voice was one of the sweetest that had ever been heard. Her success was correspondent. Mr. Kemble became intimately acquainted with them. Mr. Phillips was a man of letters, whose conversation was of the greatest value. He had seen all the chief ornaments of the stage in past times, and welcomed the young rival of their fame, whose ultimate rank in the art he with the fullest confidence predicted. Miss Phillips was quite delighted with his acting, and Mr. Kemble certainly felt the power of her beauty. When, many years after, we used to talk together about this lovely woman, and the grave had swallowed all but the memory of what she was—his former admiration fully revived, and he spoke of her, as he could *well* speak, of one for whom he had every kind, every good, and every tender feeling. And when I had written, at Mr. Kelly's desire, the inscription upon her tomb at Brighton, Mr. Kemble one day called upon me, and, as we walked out together, said to me, "Boaden, I have just read "an inscription upon Mrs. Crouch's monument. As I feel "every word of it, and know that I did not write it myself, "I know only one other man from whom it could proceed, "and you are he."

The London papers suggested a marriage between them in Dublin in the year 1783; it was even affirmed to have taken place; but I believe Miss Phillips neither received nor desired any attention from Mr. Kemble but those of very zealous friendship, perhaps a little romantic on his side. It will be seen that he was ready to risk his life for her, by the following anecdote: at the same time, I know that charms of much

less value would have received from his manliness the same protection.

They were at Cork at the time, and Miss Phillips was the subject of general admiration. Her father was confined by the gout, and had requested Mr. Kemble to conduct his daughter home from the theatre, until he should be able to attend her himself. One evening, some young officers belonging to a regiment quartered in that city, chose to contend for the honour of seeing her safe to her lodgings; and accordingly, when she went to her dressing-room, stationed themselves in the passage through which she was obliged to return. They there entered into a loud and somewhat fierce dispute, who should have the honour of being her conductor, and the terrified beauty locked her door. Mr. Kemble sent at this juncture to inform her, that he was waiting for her. She replied to his messenger, through the door, that she would not leave her room, until the officers had quitted the theatre, as she was resolved not to pass them. Upon this intimation they were politely desired to withdraw, as the doors of the theatre were going to be shut. They said, "they "would not leave the house until Miss Phillips did, as they "were waiting to conduct her." Mr. Kemble, hearing this, took his sword, and passing through them said, with dignity and firmness, "Gentlemen, Mr. Phillips, who is confined by "illness, has requested me to conduct his daughter from the "theatre; and, as gentlemen, I trust you will not molest her; "for, be assured, I will maintain the trust reposed in me." He then called Miss Phillips, and told her that her father would be anxious for her return; that it was late, and he was confident she would pass without interruption. At length she ventured forth, but at the sight of the officers was about to retreat again to her dressing-room. Mr. Kemble, however, held her fast, and audibly said, "Be under no appre-"hension, I am resolved to protect you. If any gentleman "is dissatisfied with my behaviour, I will meet him, if he "pleases, to-morrow morning, and if he can *prove* it to be "wrong, I shall be ready to apologize for it."

He led her then quietly through the passage, uninterrupted by her gay persecutors. The commanding officer, however, had heard of the confusion thus occasioned, and the next day called upon Mr. Phillips, to express his concern at the conduct of the preceding night, and to assure them, that every proper apology should be made. Miss Phillips told him, with her usual *naivete*, that "she would have no apology; all "that she required was, that the gentlemen in future would "go from the theatre with the rest of the audience, and leave

"her to return home quietly with her father, or with the per-
"son whom he might appoint to conduct her."

Her wishes were respectfully and faithfully complied with. Kemble's conduct on this occasion was admired by every body. But it was attributed to his *passion* for the young lady; and the talk of their union seemed now to have a declared sanction in his own behaviour.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Kemble arrives in town.—State of our theatres as to talent.—Drury lane.—Smith.—Fine gentleman in comedy.—Change of Manners.—Its effect upon former comedies.—John Palmer.—Dodd.—Bensley.—King.—Parsons.—The Critic.—Its first night.—Moral sensitiveness of the audience.—Sheridan an unexpected imitator of Dr. Barrow.—The passages compared.

At the period when Kemble arrived in the metropolis, our theatres could boast many distinguished ornaments of the stage. He did not come to throw light upon obscurity, but he added a new and brilliant planet to the host that shed their lustre upon our evening pleasures. The great master of the art had formed in his own theatre some very respectable artists, who, from a long habit of acting together, had rendered their performances very smooth and attractive; and although no one actor greatly predominated, yet together, they gave evidence that they had been well disciplined, that rehearsals had not been spared, and that every advantage had been drawn from the existing materials.

Mr. Smith certainly occupied a very distinguished station in the theatre, and his merits though peculiar were of no common order. In tragedy he performed most of the first rate characters with great energy, but, I think, not much discrimination. He made no mark upon peculiar portions of the dialogue—he lifted no beauties of expression into prominence—there was no light and shade in his manner. One uniform cadence seemed in him able to convey the most striking opposites of sentiment and character.

It was consequently never objected to him that he ventured upon new readings, or any readings. He spoke the obvious meaning of the text, and satisfied common auditors; and this he did in one unvaried song, in a tone of measured power. His articulation was not nice; indeed, from some compression of the organs, what he uttered in tragedy, always seemed laborious and even painful.

But all that was outside was fair and noble. His deportment was dignified and manly—his action graceful, and never redundant. Nature had denied to him that first of all

requisites, an expressive countenance, yet was he certainly a handsome man, and an elegant stage figure. In tragedy he might be said just barely to *keep* his place—in comedy there was nobody qualified to *take* it.

The fine gentleman in comedy was then very different from what it has since become—it was regulated by higher manners, and seemed indeed born in polished life, and educated in drawing-rooms. The dress kept the performer up to the character. It was necessary to wear the sword, and to manage it gracefully. As the hair was dressed and powdered, the hat was supported under the arm. The mode of approaching the lady was more respectful; and it required the most delicate address to lead and seat her upon the stage. It will be recollected that ladies wore the hoop, and in all the brilliancy of court dress, appeared very formidable beings. The flippancy of the modern style makes a bow look like a mockery: it does not seem naturally to belong to a man in pantaloons and a plain blue coat, with a white or a black waistcoat.

I cannot doubt that what is called genteel comedy, among us, suffers greatly from the comparative undress of our times. What can you do, for instance, with such a comedy as the Careless Husband? Its dialogue could never proceed from the fashionables of the *present* day—different times can only be signified by difference of costume. Should we therefore venture back to the lace and embroidery, the swords and bags of the last age? I think not: the difference from our present costume would excite a laugh. What is the result unfortunately? We drop, or impoverish these comedies.

That profound philosopher, Mr. Burke, has somewhere observed the reason why these comedies in higher life are so pleasing. Generally speaking, it would seem, that such a mode of existence was too artificial, and therefore not so fit for painting, as deficient in character, and consisting of little more than lords and footmen, ladies and their waiting-maids. But he adds, "I have observed that persons, and especially "women, in lower life and of no breeding, are fond of such "representations—it seems like *introducing them into good* "*company*, and the honour compensates the dulness of the "entertainment."*

Here is therefore a mode of existence purely artificial, stript at once of all its external illusions. In their dress, at least, the characters are sunken to common life; and the charm of being, as it were, introduced into good company is taken from the great bulk of the spectators—they are there-

* Hints for an Essay on the Drama. Works, vol. v. 4to. p. 433.

fore sure of the dulness, but neither feel nor fancy any of the honour, which without any such design the poet gave them as the compensation.

Palmer, in comedy, assumed the refined manners I have been describing with great ease, but they were assumed: he seemed to me to have attained the station, rather than to have been born to it. In his general deportment he had a sort of elaborate grace and stately superiority, which he affected on all occasions, with an accompaniment of the most plausible politeness. He was the same on and off the stage—he was constantly *acting* the man of superior accomplishments. This it was that rendered Palmer so exquisite in High Life below Stairs. He was *really* my Lord Duke's footman, *affecting* the airs and manners of his master—and here was the difference between him and Dodd, who, from the radical gentility of his fops, became in the kitchen the real Sir Harry, instead of his coxcomb and impudent valet.

Palmer, however, was an actor of infinite address, and sustained a very important line of business in the company. He was a man of great expense and luxurious habits, perfectly irreclaimable, and usually negligent; but he could throw up his eyes with astonishment that he had lost the word, or cast them down with penitent humility, wipe his lips with his eternal white handkerchief to smother his errors, and bow himself out of the greatest absurdities that continued idleness could bring upon him.

If Palmer was not the first of tragedians, he was one of the most useful—the tyrants came to him from his stately deportment; the villains from his insidious and plausible address. His Stukely yielded only to his Joseph Surface. But he was not confined in tragedy to the tyrannic or the designing; his Villeroy, in the Fatal Marriage, had a delicate and hopeless ardour of affection, that made it a decided impossibility for Isabella to resist him—he seemed a being expressly provided by fate, to wind about that lovely victim the web of inextricable misery.

In all that Palmer did you saw that he had the greatest mastery over his art. He walked the stage like no other man, and seemed made for his profession. Practice was I believe nearly all his study. In his closet he did little; but experience showed him what was still wanting in his efforts, and he became at length one of the most general favourites that the stage had ever known. If Sir Fretful be right in his assertion, (which I do not presume to doubt,) that "the "women are the best judges after all," Palmer certainly bore away the palm of their decided and lasting preference.

Dodd, with more confined powers, was one of the most perfect actors that I have ever seen. He was the fopling of the *drama* rather than the age. I mean by this, that his own times rarely showed us any thing so highly charged with the vanity of personal exhibition. He was, to be sure, the prince of pink heels, and the soul of empty eminence. As he tottered rather than walked down the stage, in all the protuberance of endless muslin and lace in his cravats and frills, he reminded you of the jutting motion of the pigeon. His action was suited to his figure. He took his snuff, or his bergamot, with a delight so beyond all grosser enjoyments, that he left you no doubt whatever of the superior happiness of a coxcomb.

The modern fop is a creature of a different kind—he is pert and volatile, incessantly in action, and becoming risible by awkward gestures and mere grimace. He has no dignity to keep up; you may laugh not only at him but in his face. Besides he is usually taken from low life, and is a caricature rather than a character.

But Dodd was not confined to the *beau monde*, he could enter into the humours of a distant age, and exhibit the fatuity of the GULL, with a truth and richness, that left every rival at an immense distance. I need only to remind his spectators of his Sir Andrew Aguecheek, in the Twelfth Night, and relate a simple fact to which I was a witness. The late Mr. Edwin went into the pit of Drury-Lane expressly to see Dodd, before he himself appeared in Sir Andrew. On his coming out he exclaimed to a friend, "This is indeed perfection! I cannot touch him in his own "way; but I hope, at all events, to do something." I saw Mr. Edwin in the character. He was in that, as in every thing, quite irresistible; but the smoothness, the native imbecility of Dodd's Sir Andrew, were transcendant. Edwin could not entirely reach that paragon of folly, to whom a common expression is a problem; who cannot conceive the meaning of *accost;* speaks four or five languages word for word without book, and demands what is *pourquoy*. Has the back trick simply as strong as any man in Illyria, plays on the viol de gambo, and goes to church in a corranto. No, Sir Toby, these things were *not* hidden; they were the only lights that shone through Dodd's Sir Andrew, and the most sportive malice could not render him more ridiculous, than he came forth from the forming hands of nature.

Mr. Bensley here offers himself to my recollection as the only perfect representative of another character in the same comedy; the smiling, yellow stockinged, and cross-gartered

Malvolio. All his peculiarities of deportment here aided his exhibition of the steward—the sliding zig-zag advance and retreat of his figure fixed the attention to his stockings and his garters. His constrained smile, his hollow laugh, his lordly assumption, and his ineffable contempt of all that opposed him in the way to greatness, were irresistibly diverting.

In that amazing production of dramatic science, the Fox, Mr. Bensley gave to the fine fly, the parasite Mosca, what no other actor in my time could pretend to give, and seemed in truth, like the character, to come back to us from a former age. He spoke Ben Jonson's language, as if he had never been accustomed to a lighter and less energetic diction, and with the Volpone of Palmer and the Corbaccio of Parsons, presented a feast to the visitors of Colman's theatre, which has seldom been equalled, and will I believe never be surpassed.

In Pierre Mr. Bensley distinguished himself greatly; and his Iago, if it yielded to any, yielded only to the profound skill of Henderson. His voice had something super-human in its tone, and his cadence was lofty and imposing. If I had been suddenly asked what Bensley was most like, I should have said, a creature of our poet's fancy, Prospero. In that part he was in truth a mighty magician, and the awful accents that he poured out seemed of power to wake sleepers from their graves, and to control those who possessed an absolute mastery over the elements. There was a very delicate and nice discrimination in Bensley, when he addressed his daughter, and the spirit Ariel. They were not two young ladies of the theatre, to whom he announced his pleasure in one common tone of command. He lowered himself parentally to Miranda's innocence and inexperience: it was evidently by his *art* that he raised himself to the control of the spirit Ariel; with whom a kind of personal attachment seemed to mitigate the authority by which that gentlest of his kind was kept in a yet unwilling allegiance. Our own day has shown us an Ariel, who almost realizes the delicate imagination of the poet.*

From Prospero, who called spirits from their confines, it is but a step to the awful shade of Hamlet's father. No man in my judgment ever delivered his harrowing tale so terribly as Mr. Bensley.

> "This was no MORTAL business, nor no sound,
> "That the EARTH ow'd."

*Miss Tree.

I avail myself of the present opportunity to say that, much has been done in the way of scenic allusion, much is still to do for both Prospero and the royal shade of Denmark. Neither of them are yet rightly drest: the first is but a conjurer with a wand; the second but a son of earth, clothed in the solid armour of the warrior. I know how common it is to say, "these are beings of the imagination, and they must "be left to it." But I think it is in the power of the stage, to do something, even in representations of this kind, to prevent that dreary plunge of the fancy down to common place reality. A greater attention to a few known principles of the sublime would easily effect this.

There was a line of character in comedy of which Mr. Bensley was by far the ablest representative—the class of satirists, like Scandal in Love for Love, Manly in the Plain Dealer, and Sir Clement Flint, which I have seen him play with pleasure, after the great original, King. It was quite delightful to hear this beautiful apostrophe to Lady Emily—that lady, observe, was Miss Farren: "And there SHE "stands; with sensibility and vivacity so uncommonly blend-"ed, that they can extract benevolence wherever it exists, "and create it where it never was before." The audience applied this praise, as the author intended them to do, as not more characteristic of Lady Emily, than of the charming actress by whom that lovely being was represented. Mr. King uttered this with his usual neatness, but I thought him hard compared with Bensley.

Mr. King, though confined in his powers, was one of the most perfect actors that ever graced the stage. His peculiar sententious manner made him seek, and indeed require, dialogue of the greatest point. The language of common parlance was not for his mouth. He converted every thing into epigram; and although no man's utterance was more rapid, yet the *ictus* fell so smartly upon the point, his tune was so perfect, and the members of his sentences were so well antagonised, that he spoke all such composition with more effect than any man of his time. Those who remember his delivery of Touchstone's degrees of the lie, and Puff's recapitulation of his own mendicant and literary arts, will have no difficulty in assenting to my remark. It was this quality that rendered him the very best speaker of prologues and epilogues that was ever heard. His manner added to the keenness of the rhymed couplet, and he presented the successive pictures of the ludicrous with so much truth, and without stooping in the least to mimicry, that his forty lines on such occasions composed a little drama perfect in itself, which had a charm independent of its relation to the play it accompanied.

He was at home in the arch and impudent Valet, who shares his master's imperfections with his confidence, and governs him by his utility. A character, which I do not think belongs to our manners as a nation, and seems imported from the French stage, but never naturalized among us.

Nothing approached him in the dry and timid habitual bachelor, drawn into the desperate union with youth and beauty and gaiety. His Sir Peter Teazle was a masterpiece. The hen-peckt and observant husband too was a character closely suited to his powers. In Lord Ogelby, he exceeded all that could be desired, and outran, I should think, by many degrees, the poet's fondest expectations. To personate such a character King must have known it. Among the debauchees of fashion he had probably seen some battered follower of the graces, whose "way of life had fallen into the "sear, the yellow leaf," but who would struggle still to hide the wrinkles on his forehead with the verdant chaplet of youth. This character proceeded from the hand of a master, and was embodied by King with a truth and identity, of which it were vain, perhaps, to seek an equal example in the whole compass of the drama. I yet seem to hear him in that delirium of ecstacy to Lovewell in the fourth act:

L. Ogle. I never was in such exquisite enchanting company, since my heart first conceived, or my senses tasted pleasure.

Love. Where are they, my lord? (*Looking about.*)

L. Ogle. In my mind, sir.

Love. What company have you there, my lord? (*Smiling.*)

L. Ogle. My own ideas, sir, which so crowd upon my imagination, and kindle it to such a delirium of ecstacy, that wit, wine, music, poetry, all combined, and each perfection, are but mere mortal shadows of my felicity.

A strong principle of association sometimes felt, and frequently unperceived, combines the subjects of our thought. Parsons is associated with King in our recollections by their constantly aiding each other in the drama. And a more powerful support of the interest of the scene than Parsons must never be expected to arise. He was formed to excite laughter, and although he would sometimes sport with those about him, and enjoy his triumph over their muscles, yet, generally speaking, he was a faithful delineator of character.

He had a figure, a gait, a countenance, a voice, that marked him out as the actor of old men in comedy. Whether he exhibited their avarice or their fondness, their insensibility or their weakness, he never lost the character for a moment.

I cannot pursue him through the long list of parts which he retained; (for whatever he once touched became his property through life;) but I will just notice a few of his most prominent performances, as they start up in my memory. His Foresight was a perfect thing: and his Corbaccio in the Fox

astonished and delighted the best judges in the art. His deafness in this wretched cormorant was truth itself—his eager expectation of Volpone's decease—his villanous temptations of Mosca, and his miserable delight at every succeeding invention of the parasite, were above all praise. Nor was his expression confined to his face, amply as the features did their office; but every passion circulated in him to the extremities, and spoke in the motion of his feet or the more striking intelligence of his hands: the latter became the claws of a harpy, when they crawled over the parchment, which blasted all his hopes, by showing that Mosca had become the heir of Volpone, instead of himself.

He was a master in the exhibition of vulgar importance. His Alscrip in the Heiress was ludicrous in the extreme—and Miss Pope was his genuine descendant. Old Doily in Mrs. Cowley's pleasant Farce of Who's the Dupe, yielded him ample scope for his talents; but it was perhaps reserved for Sheridan to show the utmost that Parsons could achieve, in Sir Fretful Plagiary in the Critic. I have repeatedly enjoyed this rich treat, and became sensible how painful laughter might be, when such a man as Parsons chose to throw his whole force into a character. When he stood under the castigation of Sneer, affecting to enjoy criticisms, which made him writhe in agony; when the tears were in his eyes, and he suddenly checked his unnatural laugh, to enable him to stare aghast upon his tormentors; a picture was exhibited of mental anguish and frantic rage, of mortified vanity and affected contempt, which would almost deter an author from the pen, unless he could be sure of his firmness under every possible provocation.

Perhaps it may a little diversify my page, if I here interpose some remarks of a merely critical nature upon the Critic itself. It seems quite clear to me that Sir Fretful should have been the author of the tragedy rehearsed, and not Puff. The former was a person to whom such a production might fairly have been imputed.—The pertinacity of Sir Fretful, and his resentment at the liberties taken with his muse, would have been infinitely more relished, than such feelings could be in Puff; who, besides, has shown himself so shrewd an observer of life, and given so masterly a detail of his own literary efforts, that HE cannot be supposed capable of the childish burlesque, which is to pass upon us as a tragedy written with a serious intention.

If in addition, Sir Fretful, had been given secretly to understand that Puff was the real author of the character of him, which Sneer had just pretended to repeat—and he had

allowed him to be present at his rehearsal, to secure his aid as a critic ;—between his resentment and his alarm, his petulance and his obsequiousness, a rehearsal of Sir *Fretful's* play would indeed have defied all gravity.

While I am on the subject of the Critic, let me record a remarkable instance of the keen sense of moral tendency in our audiences. On the first night of the piece, Puff entered abruptly upon his arts of assailing the charitable and humane, and those whom Providence had blest with affluence. The indignation of the audience here testified an apprehension that the best feelings of our nature might be chilled and checked by too marked an exposure of the impositions practised to excite it. The author found it necessary to insert a few lines (not printed) by which Puff disclaimed the wish "to deaden our feelings or lessen our humanity. To put us "on our guard, was, it seemed, essentially to serve the cause "of true charity." If the hearts of the audience were subdued by the apology, their judgment was reversed without a reason. The greatest moralists have taught, that the advantage to ourselves is the cultivation of benevolence into habit. Much reflection, and too close inquiry, leave time for the selfish passions to stop the charitable impulse. The man who deliberates will generally button up his pocket. Moreover, there is usually some distress where there is supplication. It may not be actually what it pretends; but let us not teach distrust upon system, lest it end in producing a habit of denial. There are many compensations for mistaken charity, none for hardness of heart.

It was not commonly supposed that Sheridan was a diligent reader of Dr. Barrow. Among the many admirable things, in the writings of that learned divine, is a definition of facetiousness. The late professor Porson once transcribed this into a small pocket volume of writing paper, in the way of a running text at the top of the page : intending to exemplify its positions from the copious stores of ancient and modern literature. I know not how far he had proceeded in the design, but such a tract would be a most interesting and tasteful accession to our elementary works. In the analysis which Sheridan gives of the PUFF OBLIQUE, or puff by implication, there is a striking resemblance to this masterly definition of facetiousness—the manner of putting the points is similar, and the cadence of the language is particularly imitated. This is Sheridan :—

"As to the PUFF OBLIQUE, OR PUFF BY IMPLICATION, it is "too various and extensive to be illustrated by an instance; "it attracts in titles and presumes in patents ; it lurks in the

"*limitation* of a subscription, and invites in the assurance of "crowd and incommodation at public places; it delights to "draw forth concealed merit, with a most disinterested assi- "duity; and sometimes wears a countenance of smiling cen- "sure and tender reproach.—It has a wonderful memory for "parliamentary debates, and will often give the whole "speech of a favoured member with the most flattering accu- "racy. But, above all, it is a great dealer in reports and "suppositions. It has the earliest intelligence of intended "preferments that will reflect *honor* on the *patrons;* and em- "bryo promotions of modest gentlemen—who know nothing "of the matter themselves. It can hint a ribband for im- "plied services, in the air of a common report; and with the "carelessness of a casual paragraph, suggest officers into "commands—to which they have no pretensions but their "wishes. This, Sir, is the last principal class of the ART "OF PUFFING—an art, which I hope you will now agree "with me, is of the highest dignity—yielding a tablature of "benevolence and public spirit; befriending equually trade, "gallantry, criticism and politics: the applause of genius! "the register of charity! the triumph of heroism! the self- "defence of contractors! the fame of orators! and the ga- "zette of ministers!—*Critic,* 1781. p. 44. Now for **Dr. Barrow's** definition of facetiousness :—

"It is indeed a thing so versatile and multiform, that it "seemeth no less hard to settle a clear and certain notion "thereof, than to make a portrait of Proteus, or to define "the figure of the fleeting air. Sometimes it lieth in pat al- "lusion to a known story, or in seasonable application of a "trivial saying, or in forging an apposite tale: sometimes "it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from "the ambiguity of their sense, or the affinity of their sound: "sometimes it is wrapped in a dress of humorous expression; "sometimes it lurketh under an odd similitude; sometimes "it is lodged in a sly question, in a smart answer, in a "quirkish reason, in a shrewd intimation; in cunningly di- "verting or cleverly retorting an objection: sometimes it is "couched in a bold scheme of speech, in a tart irony, in a "lusty hyperbole, in a startling metaphor; in a plausible "reconciling of contradictions, or in acute nonsense: some- "times a scenical representation of persons or things, a "counterfeit speech, a mimical look or gesture passeth for "it: sometimes an affected simplicity, sometimes a pre- "sumptuous bluntness gives it being—often it consisteth in "one knows not what, and springeth up one can hardly tell "how. Its ways are unaccountable and inexplicable, being

"answerable to the numberless rovings of fancy and wind-
"ings of language.—It raiseth admiration as signifying a
"nimble sagacity of apprehension, a special felicity of inven-
"tion, a vivacity of spirit, and reach of wit more than vul-
"gar: it procureth delight by gratifying curiosity with its
"rareness or semblance of difficulty: by diverting the mind
"from its road of serious thoughts; by instilling gayety and
"airiness of spirit; by provoking to such dispositions of
"spirit in way of emulation or complaisance; and by sea-
"soning matters, otherwise distasteful or insipid, with an
"unusual and thence grateful tang."—*Second Sermon on Evil Speaking*. Edition, 1678. p. 44.*

It is thus that one genius useus, and is entitled to use, the writings of another. It was thus, that Reynolds studied and resembled the great masters in painting of another age. I am happy in the present opportunity of comparing Sheridan with a mind fertile in every topic of wisdom, and flowing in all the felicities of neat and pointed expression. Barrow is the man whom Charles the Second called the most unfair of preachers, as he left, on all subjects, nothing for any other to say.

I here put an end to what may be thought a rather distant excursion; but every admirer of the drama is interested to know whatever had a tendency to carry to perfection the brilliant powers of Sheridan.

* Here is an *accidental* parity also—the very PAGES are the same of the two passages.

CHAPTER IV.

Covent Garden.—Lewis.—Wroughton.—F. Aickin.—Quick.—Edwin.—Henderson.—His Analytic Power exemplified in Sterne, in Falstaff.—Sportive Inventions in private.—Garrick and Dr. Johnson.—The Ode on Shakspeare.—His Readings.—The Impression left upon the Author's Mind.—The leading Actresses.—Miss Farren.—Delicacy her great Feature.—Miss Pope.—Mrs. Abington.—Her Enjouement on the stage.—Mrs. Mattocks.—Miss Younge.

I SHALL pass to the other theatre, to consider the actors who were there prominent about the time of Mr. Kemble's arrival in London. When the male talent has been thus estimated at both theatres, I shall endeavour to paint the less definable traits of the great actresses in both tragedy and comedy.

The youthful hero at Covent Garden Theatre was at this time sustained by Mr. Lewis, a name with which a croud of delightful impressions is associated. Lewis, the sprightly, the gay, the exhilarating, the genteel; the animating soul of modern, and of much of ancient comedy. The charm of this really fine actor, was in his animal spirits. As a speaker he totally failed. He had no distinctness, no measure in his utterance. He hurried as much of a sentence together as he could deliver in a breath, and stopped where the verbal connexion of what he said required him to go on. Sentiment therefore from him was often unintelligible; and all antithetical composition lost its balance and point.

In action he was redundant to a fault. He was the most restless of human beings. He kept up a perpetual flicker before the eye, and seemed to exact an almost exclusive attention. As our theatres became larger, this was rendered in some degree necessary—there was a great space to fill, and without infinite expression of the face, an actor who did not bustle was totally without effect. The tendency of Lewis, just mentioned, rendered him rather insensible to the great results of combination in the scene. The authors who wrote for him with most success found it their interest rather to send him on as a kind of comedy harlequin, whose

incessant activity was to fill the scene; and whose tricks of love, mistake, extravagance, or generosity, were to surprise or fascinate the senses, without the slightest appeal to the understanding.

But how am I to describe him in what they received for tragedy—"when he curled his hair, wore gloves in his cap, "coursed his own shadow for a traitor, and five fiends "seemed to be in poor Tom at once." Here it was too, that the strange huddling of his words upon one another had a ludicrous or distressing effect, as the auditor's mind was disposed. The mimic will hardly ever lose the way in which he uttered the taunt of Percy to Douglas in the tragedy of Percy.

> Hear this—ye knights, companions—of his fortune!
> That Douglas! the valiant—the renowned Douglas,
> Fenc'd round with guards, and safe—in his own *castle!*
> Surpris'd a knight—unarm'd—and bravely—slew him.

What there was to redeem these imperfections, was to be found in his genteel deportment and earnest manner—his attention to the business of the scene, and the fire he threw into some situations, suited to his abilities. If the action did not interest, it never hung with Lewis; and some way or other even the tragedy of this actor helped "to fill a pit, as "well as that of better men."

But it were a waste of time to expose this false and idle exhibition of tragedy. The good sense of the actor laid down the buskin, when, as the manager, he might still have retained it: and he confined himself to what nobody ever wished him to resign—to Mercutio and the Copper Captain—to Ranger, to Belcour, and the long list of sparkling adventurers, in the airy comedies of O'Keefe, Reynolds, and Morton.

Wroughton, with requisites entirely dissimilar, was the rival, or rather, the antagonist of Lewis in the scene. His person was ill made, his face round and swoln, his features small and inexpressive—his voice uncertain, hoarse, and disagreeable. However, a certain consequence invested his deportment. He was never vacant or idle. He never neglected himself or his audience. Always perfect, always where he should be, exciting no censure, and challenging but little applause, he yet kept a respectable station in tragedy, and I have seen him bold enough to touch, after Garrick, that hopeless part, King Lear.

There is in acting what may be called, a *safe* line. It is the doing common and traditional things in a common way;

without pretending to original conception, or any refinements of execution. If a great genius arise during such a leaden reign, to be sure he covers such vulgar stuff with confusion, and hands it over to speedy oblivion. I think Mr. Wroughton was even to be *admired* in the plain gentlemen of comedy, whether impassioned or considerate. There was good sense, good manners, and not the slightest affectation in his performances.

Mr. F. Aickin was a sensible speaker, firm, articulate, and impressive, without the tenderness of his brother James, and with little or no variety. His characters were all nearly of the same kind in tragedy, and he usually acted the tyrants, though his look was uniformly benevolent, and his deportment that of a staid and most reasonable personage. In comedy, where any father was exhibited, that was neither to be duped by the one sex, nor laughed at by the other, Aickin represented that rare character.

I have often reflected with indignation upon the vicious taste of a public, that can bear this eternal outrage upon decency, the ridicule thrown in our comedies upon the parental character. But it is, I fear, the unavoidable result of plays constructed upon the tender passion; where the art and mystery of defeating caution, or betraying confidence, is taught in the highest perfection.

Quick had most generally the honour to sustain the testy old gullable personage just alluded to. I do not think there was much discrimination in the way he played such characters. There was the same constantly florid face—the same compression of the mouth and elevation of the eyebrows, the same shrill squeak in the utterance, and odd totter in the step; but his entrance was invariably the signal for honest hearty merriment.

To this general effect of Quick's acting, an important circumstance in his theatrical life most powerfully contributed. He was beyond all comparison, in comedy, the decided favourite of the late KING, a determined patron of the stage, whom for so many of my best years, it delighted me to see, with his family, enjoying himself in the midst of his people. There was a gay and hearty jocularity about the king, while sitting at a comedy, which a Cynic could hardly have resisted—a something so endearing to see greatness relaxing from its state, throwing off, and apparently glad to throw off, some of the trammels of royalty, and exhibiting, without the least restraint, a full sense of pleasure, at a liberal and enlightened amusement.

Quick's powers of entertainment were not confined to the

stage—he told a story admirably. The late king sometimes had him in attendance at Buckingham house; and the little time he could spare from the various business that pressed upon him, he delighted to pass in listening to Quick's eccentricities. He frequently appointed to see him in the riding-house, and took his amusement and his exercise together.

Edwin, as a comedian, seemed born to give effect to the farces of O'Keefe. The Son-in-Law and Peeping Tom merit particular attention. His Bowkit, the dancing-master, was surely the most characteristic exhibition that could be imagined: it made the Son-in-Law one of the most attractive farces of modern times. Peeping Tom, however, had one scene more masterly than any thing I have seen in farce: I mean that of poor Tom's abstraction, while in his mind's eye, he sees the whole procession of Lady Godiva pass before him. This was a thing of pure fancy and infinitely productive. You would have sworn to the succeeding images of this procession—the distant view of the equitation of Godiva—her approach—"her unadorned charms" at last brought fully before his eye, and the burst of commentary, "Talk of a Coro-"nation!" altogether produced a revelry of enjoyment, that used to convulse the spectators: and it is a precious recollection of the power of a true comedian.

I know nothing from Edwin, in pure comedy, that exceeded his Sir Hugh Evans—his study of the sword and the word—his ejaculations—his cholers and tremplings of mind—his music: his songs and psalms, neither and yet both, were among the greatest luxuries of the art. The Sir Andrew Aguecheek, though rich, I have already said wanted the perfect finish of Dodd.

Mr. Henderson was at this time, perhaps, the greatest master of the art: he resembled his illustrious predecessor in his versatility. His tragedy, however, was certainly inferior to his comedy. In the former he had comparatively fewer requisites. His understanding was of the highest order, and his feelings could be instantaneously excited; but his person was without either dignity or grace, and his eye, though well placed for expression, wanted colour, as his face, though rather handsome, was too fleshy to show all the muscular action, in which expression resides. He was neglectful too of such aids as might have been had to his figure. He paid not the slightest attention to costume, and was indifferent even as to the neatness or fitting of his dress. He affected to care nothing about it. He pleased himself that he could at length make you forget the want which needed not to have existed. All his excellences were perfectly con-

comitant with propriety of dress. Had he studied appearance, his Lear might have been *venerable*. Although his Hamlet could not be the "mould of form," it might easily have been "the glass of fashion;" but he never looked even to the linings of the suit he wore; and once boasted that he had played, I think, ten characters consecutively, in the same coat. His conceptions were grand, and beautiful, and just; but they were often baffled by his execution of them. When Henderson's Lear was first discovered, he looked like Falstaff sitting as Henry the fourth; and when Lear speaks in his sleep, and fancying himself on the point of gaining the battle, exclaims, "charge, charge upon the flank," the tones were exactly those with which Falstaff encourages Hal in the combat with Percy; and excited a titter from so unsuitable a recollection. He had indeed made Falstaff his own, and the jolly knight seemed rather too kindly to have returned the compliment; for that vast soul of humour more or less informed all his other characters.

The power of Henderson was analytic. He was not contented with the mere light of common meaning—he showed it you through a prism, and refracted all the delicate and mingling hues, that enter into the composition of any ray of human character. Besides the philosophic ingenuity of such a design, he had a voice so flexible, that its tones conveyed all that his meaning would insinuate. I will try at least to make this clearer by an instance, and it shall be taken from a common book, "The Sentimental Journey," which every body has read to *himself;* and few, who have heard Henderson, would, I should think, venture to read to *another*. It opens with this trite remark, "They order this matter, said "I, better in France." As it stands it is a plain assertion, nothing more. As Henderson contrived to speak it, you felt that vanity was trying to take credit for foreign travel, without having stirred from home—that it was not hearsay which he would deliver, but personal experience that he would insinuate. You knew from him distinctly, that it was a truth *finessed*. Let any other reader try this, and he will find what a task he has undertaken, and how little he can do. Often with powers of mimicry, that used to be thought exact, have I tried to give to my ear once more what it received from his utterance; but I am sure that something was wanting in every effort.

He would sometimes delight to show, without language, the rapid and opposite emotions, as they rise and chace each other in the mind. A masterly effort of this kind was Falstaff's reading the letter from Mrs. Ford in the presence of

the "foolish carrion" Mrs. Quickly. First, you saw, that he had "his belly full of Ford;"—her messenger even was an object of detestation. He glanced over the beginning of the letter, and pished at its apologies. He turned again to the messenger, to see how her air was in unison with the language of her mistress. The Cudgell of Ford then seemed to fall upon his shoulders, and he shrunk from the enterprise. He read a sentence or two of the letter,—a spark of lechery twinkled in his eye, which turned for confirmation of his hopes upon love's ambassadress—and thus the images of suffering and desire, of alarm and enjoyment, succeeded one another, until at last the oil of incontinency in him settled above the water of the Thames, and the "divinity of odd "numbers determined him to risk the *third* adventure."

In this bow of Ulysses few actors of the present day presume to shoot. Munden once told me, "he had been all his "life trying to make up his mind to it." I am quite sure that he would stand the next to Henderson in the part. But he may, and probably will, close his career, and leave Falstaff unattempted.

While treating of the comic powers of Henderson, I may be allowed to allude to those sportive effusions, which constituted a great charm in his society. One of his scenic inventions was the following. He represented Mr. Garrick in full preparation for the Jubilee at Stratford, calling upon his old master Johnson, to recite to him the Ode to Shakspeare. The Doctor was occupied *sartorice*, repairing some part of his dress—a favourite cat was sporting about his chair; and the apprehensive author was trying to cover, by his brilliant recitation, the literary defects of his Ode. He gave you the most perfect imitation of Garrick. The critic thundered out his objections, and the writer timidly defended his composition. The sage rejoined with new point and more decisive manner: the reciter fluttered in hopeless and breathless alarm:—and the style of Johnson's criticism was as like, as the voice and action of either pupil or master. I could wish that this effort, in particular, had been taken down, as he delivered it. There have been few imitations of the Johnsonian style of criticism so exact, and none so diverting. The Ode lay sufficiently open to an acute critic, and Henderson had well studied the remarks of the Doctor upon some of the minor poets.

There were many other pleasantries, which my late amiable friend, his widow, used to remind me of, as we sat together reviewing the past—and I frequently requested her to write what she recollected of these *jeux d'esprit*; but I fear no-

thing was ever done. Who, besides, was there in existence to give them voice and gesture, and preserve, as he did, faithful copies of the distinguished originals? He used to revive his Garrick also in some of the busy scenes of his management. His interviews with ladies of distinction—his interference for them with the box office; and mixed up a bustle of so much anxiety and smartness, importance and politeness, as showed the infinite details of theatrical superintendence in his time, and the restless diligence with which Garrick attended to every thing conducive to his success. I believe most of these exhibitions to have been grounded upon actual occurrences.

While I am thus recalling the charms of Henderson's society, I must not omit those of his occasional readings to his friends, and which the public during Lent enjoyed at Freemason's Hall; where, with the elder Sheridan, he presented one of the most attic entertainments that was ever given. Henderson read chiefly from Sterne, whom he made very peculiarly his own; from Swift, from Prior, from Cowper, and a variety of amusing and interesting fugitive pieces, brought by him into general notice, and adorned with flashes of genuine humour, and the most exquisite sensibility. Here I saw, sitting in the front, the graceful form of Mrs. Siddons; and in her expressive countenance witnessed the triumph of the reader's skill. Lower down in the hall, was the fine and manly figure of Kemble, standing up with fixed attention, to hear from a rival artist, some of the very pieces, which his early efforts had rendered the favourites of other and very different audiences.

Such were the attractions in my early years. They have left impressions never to be effaced. I cannot expect to have many readers, who remember these exhibitions of talent;—nearly forty years have passed away, since they delighted and instructed us: all, therefore, that I can hope to do, is to keep the memory of them alive, till some great and original master of the art arise among us; that he may catch, from what has been done, the ambition to renew so refined an enjoyment, and redeem us as a people from *minor* amusements, which degrade at once our morals and our taste, and render the chance of better things rather an object of our prayers than our expectations.

In my remarks upon the leading actresses of the year 1783, I shall first pay my respects to Miss Farren, who in comedy,

if not in tragedy, merited the highest distinction. She had succeeded at Drury Lane Theatre to the characters which had been performed by Mrs. Abington; though it would be difficult to mention two actresses, who differed more essentially in their comic style. They both delighted to exhibit the woman of fashion: but the character received the differences of its colouring from the personal and mental qualities of the representatives.

Miss Farren, at this time, in her person, was tall and perfectly graceful; her face was beautiful and expressive; her voice was rather thin, and of but slender power, but rendered effective by an articulation of the greatest neatness and precision. It was her practice, from the weakness of her organ, to stand rather forward upon the stage.

When I carry my recollection back to the *peculiar* character of her acting, I think I may say that it was distinguished by the grace of *delicacy*, beyond that of every comic actress I have seen. It was as it were the *soul* of all she did; and even in the comedies of Congreve, she never lost it for a moment, amid the free allusions, and sometimes licentious expressions of his dialogue. The eye sparkled with intelligence, but it was a chaste and purified beam, from a mind unsullied though sportive. Her levity therefore was never wanton; her mirth had no approach to rudeness. She played upon a coxcomb of either sex with the highest zest, but refinement was the invariable attendant upon her ridicule, and taste seemed to preside alike over her actions and her utterance.

From her early habit of acting tragedy, she had drawn enough to give to the occasional *pathos* of comedy a charm of infinite value. The reproach of her Julia, in the Rivals, to Falkland, was extremely affecting; and few scenes drew more tears than her sensibility commanded in the return of Lady Townley, to the use of her heart and her understanding. Many years have now elapsed since I first beheld this distinguished lady, but I can safely say, that, in her own line, she has never been equalled, nor approached.

The same thing may be said, and with equal justice, of her usual attendant, Miss Pope, the paragon of chambermaids: the pert, sly, jocose Abigail of modern comedy: but her excellence cannot be comprehended in a definition; it was too much like the lightning; it was gone before it could be fixed by either the pencil or the pen. The great respectability of her private life kept her from every taint of vulgarity: her very flippancy had no coarseness, and the utmost decorum and modesty of carriage distinguished her in the long list of her performances.

Mrs. Abington seemed to combine in her excellence the requisites for both the fashionable lady and her maid, and more, much more, than all this. She was the most brilliant satirist of her sex. It is impossible to describe the way in which she spoke the pleasantries of Beatrice; it almost realized the character given of it by Benedick; "If her breath were as "terrible as her terminations, there would be no living near "her, she would infect to the North Pole. I cannot endure "that Lady's tongue." There was, in truth, such a tartness in her pleasantry;—she was so fine a speaker of humour, like her friend Tom King,—and they were so suited to each other, that they each lost nearly half their soul in their separation. The ball must be kept up by players of equal skill, for the game to be perfectly played.

There was the most *enjouement* in Mrs. Abington that I have ever seen upon the stage. She had more self-complacency, and seemed more triumphant in her captivations, than any other Lady Betty of my times. She saw nature through a highly refined medium, and never condescended to vulgar taste. Her acting bore the marks of great application, and was at once surprising and delightful. The modern stage affords but a slight idea of her. However, I have often thought, that, had Mrs. Glover been thrown into high society; had she been relieved from the encumbrances of family, and possessed full leisure to cultivate her genius, she would have been a very interesting substitute for Mrs. Abington, and, without a question, the first comic actress of the present day. But we seem, most absurdly, to expect the *mature* knowledge of the art from mere youth and beauty; and are quite astonished that the points of the dialogue are not made, and that the business of the scene has become flat or vapid beyond all parallel. But dramatic speaking is not cultivated as an art among us. Where are the masters?—the models are all gone.

Mrs. Mattocks was a comic actress of whom it is somewhat difficult to attempt a character. In her private manners she was rather refined, and had some of the graceful ease of the old school. On the stage she had a taste for the greatest *breadth* of effect, and excited probably as much laughter as Lewis himself. She was the *patent* representative of all WIDOWS of distinction, whether they were discriminated by valuable or mischievous properties. Nor were her chambermaids without the usual dexterity of the class, and probably with something beyond their usual assurance. She, in these characters, no more resembled Miss Pope of

the other theatre, than Lewis did King when acting the same parts.

The vulgar *Malkin*, raised into ludicrous importance, came from Mattocks in genuine coarseness, both of look and deportment. Her voice, on such occasions, was as dissonant as a *saw*, and she converted her natural quick short step and gliding gait into an awkward *hobble* or *jolt*, that seemed studied from the bumpkins of a country fair. Her eyes assumed a wide unmeaning stare, and she accompanied what she said with a kind of *idiot giggle*, that was far beyond the reach of every thing like reason. If her mirth was checked on the sudden, and her object defeated, she would burst into a *cry*, sometimes a *scream*, so truly farcical, that she was invaluable to modern writers.

Andrews and Topham in their epilogues used to turn her loose into the CITY, and from gluttony in the alderman to dandyism in the shopman—from the full-blown Lady Mother, and Miss, Mamma's rival and hourly annoyance, to the lowest of the LOW, she finished out the sketch of either sex, and made a couplet frequently unfold a "whole history." She was a sort of *stage* HOGARTH as to the inferior orders of the community; and in her rapid changes they passed before you as in a *camera*, with all their uncouth gestures and in their natural colours.

It followed from all this, that she never could be *flat* or *heavy*—her spirits were of the buoyant kind; she kept up the ball with either Lewis or Quick, and was an established favourite to the last. She did not come into either the *Heidlebergs* or *Nurses*, the property of Mrs. Green, and Mrs. Pit, and ultimately of Mrs. Davenport.

Miss Younge had astonishing versatility as an actress. I know not whether, in strictness, her genius could be called of the first order; but she certainly was the most useful performer that any theatre could possess. In the higher tragedy she was dignified and lofty, but her countenance was not sufficiently expressive. In the kindling fervour of an enthusiastic spirit she had a mode of delivery peculiar to herself, and never failed to carry her audience along with her. She wore the male habit occasionally, and the really delicate and affectedly saucy forester, Rosalind, never had, in my judgment, a more winning representative.

In comedy, her women of fashion, though rather too solid and stately, were yet graceful and sportive. She did not affect a girlish activity: it was the mind that was buoyant, and it *seemed* to carry the frame lightly through the scene. If the character had a vein of sensibility in addition to the other

captivations, she seized it with so much power, and her voice became so perfect a vehicle for the passion of the moment, that it was impossible she should have a superior. I refer here more particularly to the fine flight of Miss Hardy, in the masquerade scene of Mrs. Cowley's Belle's Stratagem, "Join him in the victorious war-dance on the borders of Lake Ontario," &c. The animation of some points, the subdued softness of others, and the swelling triumph of her close of the passage, furnished one of the most fascinating exhibitions upon the stage. Such was Miss Younge, and, to the last, such was Mrs. Pope. No! I will not ask whether her Queen Katharine equalled that of Mrs. Siddons, or her Beatrice that of Mrs. Abington; but I will record, as the greatest tribute to her talents, the exclamation of Mr. Harris, the manager, on her death, that "the greatest loss he could ever sustain had just befallen him."

CHAP. V.

Mr. Kemble's first appearance in London.—Hamlet.—Pre-eminence of the character.—Cast of the play.—Originality of his Hamlet.—Compared with Garrick and Henderson.—Mr. Steevens's petulance.—Misstatement of a passage.—Dr. Johnson with Mr. Kemble.—The exclamation upon man.—Points in Mr. Kemble's Hamlet continued.—Hamlet's Ghost.—Why he is drest in armour.—Pneumatology of Shakspeare's age.—Garrick's alteration of Hamlet.

It was on Tuesday, the 30th of September, 1783, that Mr. Kemble made his first appearance at Drury-lane theatre, in the character of Hamlet. The bills announced the play as originally written by Shakspeare; by which it was to be understood no more, than that it was not the miserable alteration of the play, which had so discredited the taste and judgment of Garrick. There were, notwithstanding, *then*, (and they continue) many important omissions, which the length of what *is* given alone can sanction: some of the passages absolutely essential to the conduct of the story; all of them to the full development of Hamlet's most interesting and singular character.

Hamlet has been more critically considered than any other of Shakspeare's dramas, and the Prince of Denmark has, in his personal character, afforded a constant theme for moral investigation. But although he is decidedly the great favourite of our countrymen, much pains have been taken to show, that their affection is misplaced, and that Hamlet is vicious and immoral, and consequently unworthy of that sympathy which has attended him from the time that Shakspeare exhibited him upon the stage to the present hour. Upon a hint from Dr. Akenside, Mr. Steevens has pronounced his conduct "every way unnatural and indefensible, unless he were to be regarded as a young man whose intellects were in some degree impaired." It may readily be conceived, that such an opinion would never pass without contradiction; and a more highly philosophical and charitable decision has resolved all his seeming guilt into the really amiable irresolution of his nature.

I mention this dispute, to show the great attention that had been excited to the character; that in an age of commentary every line had been critically considered; and that,

though youth might choose the part from the aid it really lends to the actor, yet it required a very "learned spirit of human dealing," a sound judgment, and all the other requisites of the art, to obtain for the performer, in that day, any marked and distinguished admiration.

I remember speaking once with Mr. Kemble upon the question agitated among the critics, whether Othello or Macbeth were our poet's greatest production. "The critics," said he, "may settle that point among them; they will decide only "for *themselves*. As to the people, notice this. Mr. Boaden: "take up any Shakspeare you will, from the first collection "of his works to the last, which has been *read*, and look what "play bears the most obvious signs of perusal. My life for "it, they will be found in the volume which contains the "play of Hamlet." I dare say, in my time, some hundred copies have been inspected by me; but this test has never failed in a single instance.

The actor, therefore, who on the previous reputation of learning and diligence, excited notice and challenged criticism, had every possible difficulty to contend with: if he agreed with his predecessors and contemporaries, it would be said that he wanted originality; if he differed essentially, in either conception or execution, he was open to the charge of self-sufficiency and presumption. To extricate him in some degree from this dilemma, and to dispose the audience favourably towards him, there was some influence to be used, and it no doubt was employed with considerable success. Mrs. Siddons had, with becoming zeal, prepared her friends to welcome her elder brother; and as she had herself acted repeatedly with him, there could be no reasonable doubt of the opinion she expressed of his talents. I am not sure that the inadequate exhibition of Othello by Stephen Kemble the week before at Covent Garden, did any harm to his brother. It was, to be sure, awkward to find a foil in his own family, but the incident seemed to turn itself into a joke against the manager of the rival theatre, who had engaged the *big*, instead of the *great* Kemble.

The cast of the play had nothing peculiar in it. Kemble took the performers of the other parts as he found them. Bensley was the Ghost—Farren the Horatio—Baddely the Polonius—Barrymore the Laertes. Packer had been so long the excellent or vicious monarch of the stage, that he was never deposed. By a very striking anticipation, Mrs. Hopkins performed his mother; and Miss Field was the representative of Ophelia. Parsons was the grave-digger of the bill only; being indisposed, Suett, who had before "shovelled

in dust" for him at York, attended him on this occasion. I notice this last circumstance to show the malignity of one of his critics in the papers; who, finding his Hamlet full of faults, yet gave to Parsons his most decided approbation. This gentleman thus proved his power of seeing, what was invisible to every perception but his own, or rather of writing from the play-bill without visiting the theatre.

On Mr. Kemble's first appearance before the spectators, the general exclamation was, "How very like his sister!" and there was a very striking resemblance. His person seemed to be finely formed, and his manners princely; but on his brow hung the weight of "some intolerable wo." Apart from the expression called up by the situation of Hamlet, there struck me to be in him a peculiar and personal fitness for tragedy. What others assumed, seemed to be inherent in Kemble. "Native, and to the manner born," he looked an abstraction, if I may so say, of the characteristics of tragedy.

The first great point of remark was, that his Hamlet was decidedly original. He had seen no great actor whom he could have copied. His style was formed by his own taste or judgment, or rather grew out of the peculiar properties of his person and his intellectual habits. He was of a solemn and deliberate temperament—his walk was always slow, and his expression of countenance contemplative—his utterance rather tardy for the most part, but always finely articulate, and in common parlance seemed to proceed rather from organization than voice.

It was soon found that the critic by profession had to examine the performance of a most acute critic. To the general conception of the character I remember but one objection; that the deportment was *too scrupulously graceful;* but, besides that Hamlet is represented by the poet as "the glass of fashion and the mould of form," I incline to think the critic's standard was too low, rather than Kemble's too high; the manners were not too refined for such a person as Mr. Kemble's.

There were points in the dialogue in almost every scene which called upon the critic, where the young actor indulged his own sense of the meaning; and these were to be referred to the text or context, in Shakspeare, and also to the previous manner of Garrick's delivery, or the existing one of Henderson's. The enemies of Kemble, that is, the injudicious friends of other actors, called those points NEW READINGS; which became accordingly a term of reproach among the unthinking. The really judicious, without positively deciding, admitted the ingenuity and praised the diligence of the young

artist. They freely confessed, that there might be endless varieties in the representation of such a character; justifiable, too, by very plausible reasonings; and congratulated themselves and the public upon a new and original actor, whose performances, at all events, would never disgust them by common place, but would at all times tend to make Shakspeare better known, by the necessity for his being more studied; that the reference must be perpetual from the actor to the works; and in thus contributing to the fame of the poet, the performer might eventually establish his own.

A pretty extensive list of such points is before me, noticed by myself and by others, where Mr. Kemble differed from Garrick or Henderson, or both. I am therefore quite sure that I do not attribute to the beginning of his career, what I only noticed in the progress. The points too are curious in themselves, and merit to be here preserved; besides, that criticism unexemplified is as fruitless as metaphysics where the terms are not defined. We must have the passage literally before us, to know what we talk about. The first objection was to an emphasis. He was instructed to say,

"'Tis an *un*-weeded garden that grows to seed."

But Mr. Kemble thought, and justly, that "unweeded" was quite as intelligible with the usual and proper accent as the improper one; and besides, that the exquisite modulation of the poet's verse should not be jolted out of its music, for the sake of giving a more pointed explanation of a word already sufficiently understood.

"Sir, my good FRIEND! I'll change *that* name with you."

Thus Mr. Kemble, upon Horatio's saying to Hamlet that he was his poor *servant* ever. Dr. Johnson conceives it to mean, "I'll be your servant, you shall be my friend." In which case the emphasis would rest thus:

"Sir, my good FRIEND! I'll *change* that name with you."

Perhaps it may be rather, "Change the term servant into that of friend. Consider us, without regard to rank, as friends." Henderson, evidently so understood it, for he said,

"I'll change *that* name with YOU.

It was, I think, a novelty, when, after having recognized Horatio and Marcellus by name, Mr. Kemble turned cour-

teously towards Bernardo, and applied the "Good even, sir," to him. The commentators were too busy in debating whether it should be evening or morning, to bestow a thought as to the *direction* of this gentle salutation.

It was observed how keenly Kemble inserted an insinuation of the King's intemperance, when he said to Horatio and the rest,—

"We'll teach you to DRINK *deep*,—ere you depart."

He restored, with the modern editors of Shakspeare, "*Dearest* foe," and "*Beteeme* the winds of Heaven;" and he was greatly censured for doing so, because, as the first term is unknown to the moderns in the sense of *most important*, or, as Johnson thought *direst*, and the word *beteeme* not known at all, the critic said, it might show *reading* so to speak them, but did not show clear *meaning*; a thing of more moment to a popular assembly. This is a question, I am sensible, on which a great deal may be said; but let it be observed, that it involves the *integrity of a poet's text*. For the present, let it rest.

"My father,—methinks I see my father."

Professor Richardson terms this "the most solemn and striking apostrophe that ever poet invented." Mr. Kemble seemed so to consider it:—the image entirely possessed his imagination; and accordingly, after attempting to pronounce his panegyric—

"He was a man, take him for all in all,"

a flood of tenderness came over him, and it was with tears he uttered,—

"I shall not look upon his like again."

I know the almost stoical firmness with which others declaim this passage; and the political opposition affected, between the terms KING and MAN; but I must be excused, if I prefer the melting softness of Kemble, as more germane to "the weakness and the melancholy" of Hamlet.

"Did YOU not speak to it?" (*To Horatio.*)

Not only personally put to Horatio, for this must certainly be done, with emphasis or without, (as the others had said

they did not speak to the spectre, and had invited Horatio, that he might do so,) but emphatically and tenderly, as inferring from the peculiar intimacy between them, that *he* surely had ventured to enquire the cause of so awful a visitation. Mr. Steevens, from a pique which Mr. Kemble explained to me, thought fit to annoy him upon this innovation; and, without naming the object of his sarcasm, has left it in the margin of his Shakspeare.

"Be it remembered, (says that editor,) that the words are not, as lately pronounced on the stage, 'Did not *you* speak to it?' but 'Did you not *speak* to it?' How awkward will the innovated sense appear, if attempted to be produced from the passage as it really stands in the true copies!

'Did YOU not speak to it?'

The emphasis, therefore, should most certainly rest on *speak*."

Here is, in the first place, a misstatement. Mr. Kemble never did so speak; but always placed the pronoun YOU before the negative; and, as to the awkwardness, it may be more difficult to discover, than the critic was aware. Shakspeare, when putting a question very personally indeed, preserves this very arrangement. As thus to Banquo in Macbeth:—

"Do YOU not hope your children shall be kings?"

Mr. Kemble, however, told me, that he had submitted this to Dr. Johnson in one of those calls upon him which Boswell has mentioned, and that the doctor said to him, "To be sure, sir,—YOU should be strongly marked. I told Garrick so, long since, but Davy never could see it."

"And for my soul, what CAN it do to *that*,
Being a thing immortal as itself?"

Garrick here, with great quickness, said, "What can it do to THAT?" There is, I think, more impression in Kemble's manner of putting it. In Garrick it was a truism asserted; in Kemble not merely asserted, but *enjoyed*.

Having drawn his sword, to menace the friends who prevented him from following the Ghost, every Hamlet before Mr. Kemble presented the point to the phantom as he followed him to the removed ground. Kemble, having drawn it on his friends, retained it in his right hand, but turned his left towards the spirit, and drooped the weapon after him—a

change both tasteful and judicious. As a defence against such a being it was ridiculous to present the point.—To retain it unconsciously showed how completely he was absorbed by the dreadful mystery he was exploring.

The *kneeling* at the descent of the Ghost was censured as a *trick*. I suppose merely because it had not been done before; but it suitably marked the filial reverence of Hamlet, and the solemnity of the engagement he had contracted. Henderson saw it, and adopted it immediately,—I remember he was applauded for doing so.

These two great actors agreed in the seeming intention of particular disclosure to Horatio—

"Yes, but there *is*, Horatio,—and much offence too."

turned off upon the pressing forward of Marcellus to partake the communication. Kemble *only*, however, prepared the way for this, by the marked address to Horatio, "Did you not speak to it?"

In the scene with Polonius, where Hamlet is asked what is the matter which he reads, and he answers, "Slanders, sir," Mr. Kemble, to give the stronger impression of his wildness, tore the leaf out of the book. Even this was remarked, for he was of consequence enough, at first, to have every thing he did minutely examined.

A critic observed, that, in the scene with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he was not only familiar, but gay and smiling; and that he *should* be quite the reverse, because he tells them that he "has lost all his mirth." &c. This was pure misapprehension in the critic. The scene itself ever so slightly read would have set him right. Hamlet, from playing on Polonius, turns to receive gaily and with smiles his *excellent friends*, his *good lads*, who are neither the *button on fortune's cap*, nor the *soles of her shoe*. And it is only when the conception crosses him that they were sent to sound him, that he changes his manner, puts his questions eagerly and importunately, and, having an eye upon them, gives that account of his disposition, which rendered it but a sleeveless errand which they came upon.

Amid the dry cavils of criticism, let me indulge myself in saying, that such a piece of exquisite prose, as this very account, never was written even by Shakspeare himself. However lofty the conceptions, the expression is never turgid; and the reader may remark what care the Poet has taken to preserve it in a state of pure prose, for it never touches upon the measures of his verse. Let him compare

the Moralists of Shaftesbury, for instance, and he will find there, wherever the writer strains after the sublime, the language seems inclined to become blank verse if it could. The passage from Shakspeare I will here insert.

"I have of late, (but wherefore I know not,) lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises: and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a steril promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appears no other thing to me, than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! in form, and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me."

Bishop Warburton finely observes upon the above—"This is an admirable description of a rooted melancholy, sprung from thickness of blood; and artfully imagined to hide the true cause of his disorder from the penetration of these two friends, who were set over him as spies."

After this digression, I proceed with the *points* in Mr. Kemble's performance of Hamlet.

"The *mobled* queen."

Garrick repeated this after the player, as in doubt: Kemble, as in sympathy. And accordingly Polonius echoes his approbation; and says, that the expression is good. "*Mobled* queen is good."

"Perchance to *dream!*"

Kemble prolonged the word dream meditatingly. Just after to Ophelia, he spoke the word *lisp* with one—lithp. A refinement below him.

Henderson and he concurred, in saying to Horatio,—

"Aye in my heart *of* heart, as I do thee."

Garrick gave it differently: "heart of *heart.*" But I think would have attained his purpose better by changing his emphasis to "*heart* of heart," as I remember somewhere, I think in Thomson,—

"And all the *life* of life is gone;"

that is, I cherish thee in the divinest particle of the heart, which is to that organ itself what the heart is to the body. It

emaciates these ideas much to try to unfold them—but some effort must be made, or we should talk vaguely.

In the mock play before the king, Garrick threw out, as an unmeaning rant, addressed to Lucianus,

> "The croaking raven doth bellow for revenge."

But I have not the slightest doubt, with Henderson and Kemble, that it is a reflection of Hamlet applicable to his own case, and quite on a par with that in Macbeth :—

> "The raven himself is hoarse,
> "That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
> "Under my battlements."

Kemble gave the argument of the play in the finest manner possible—

> "They do but *jest :* POISON in jest,"

in *tone*, and *observation* at the time, beyond all praise.

The reference to Rosencrantz, after Guildenstern, with the pipe, "I do beseech YOU," is an innovation. It involves both persons in the disgrace ; but if allowed at all, it can only be permitted as a felicity of *action* in the performance. At all events, the stately *march* from Guildenstern to Rosencrantz always seemed to me a *poor* thing ; and indeed chilling what was to follow : too formal, in a word, for the condition of Hamlet's mind.

In the chamber of the queen—"Is it the king ?" was addressed to the million. Hamlet's nature is so little vindictive ! In this scene, it was doubted, whether, in "speaking "daggers" to the queen, they were *drawn* and *sharp* enough? It struck me, that greater keenness would have been unfilial, and as if he took *delight* in the task, which only stern necessity imposed upon him.

Kemble *knelt* in the fine adjuration to his mother. An objection was taken, that the passage is *preceptive* rather than supplicatory : I think not.

> "Mother, for the love of grace!
> "Lay not this flattering unction to your soul."

As an affectionate son, he is endeavouring to awake all the feelings of the mother in her, to combat the delusion of her guilty attachment. The more endearing his urgency, the more strictly natural. Hamlet does not do justice to himself, when he adds.

"Forgive me this, my virtue!
"For, in the fatness of these pursy times,
"Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg;
"Yea, curb and woo, for leave to do him good."

He would fain persuade himself, that he is playing the politician; while, in reality, he is only giving way to the pious tenderness of his feelings. Nor is this the only instance to be found of his amiable self-delusion.

"And when you are desirous to *be* blest,
"I'll blessing *beg* of you."

Henderson again differed from Mr. Kemble's reading: thus—

"And when you are desirous to be *blest*,
"I'll blessing beg of you."

In the *grave* scene he never entirely satisfied himself: he was too studiously graceful; and, under his difficulties, seemingly too much at his ease. The exclamation, on hearing that the dead body was Ophelia's, had not the pathos of Henderson's; who seemed here struck to the very soul. The tone yet vibrates in my ear with which he uttered—

"What! the fair Ophelia!"

Years after, I reminded Mr. Kemble of this very fine point, and he readily came into the manner of his predecessor.

The whole management of the strange fencing scene with Laertes was very graceful, and conciliatory; and the operation of the poison, the tender address to Horatio, and the death, exhibited a most interesting close of this amiable, unfortunate, but matchless character.

We have for so many years been accustomed to see Hamlet dressed in the Vandyke costume, that it may be material to state, that Mr. Kemble played the part in a modern court dress of rich black velvet, with a star on the breast, the garter and pendant ribband of an order—mourning sword and buckles with deep ruffles: the hair in powder; which, in the scenes of feigned distraction, flowed dishevelled in front and over the shoulders.

As to the expression of the face, perhaps the powdered hair, from contrast, had a superior effect to the short curled wig at present worn. The eyes seemed to possess more brilliancy. With regard to costume, correctness in either case is out of the question, only that the Vandyke habit

is preferable, as it removes a positive anachronism and inconsistency.

The ghost of Hamlet's father appears in *armour ;* a dress certainly suited to a warrior, but to one of other times. Now this was not at all incompatible with the dress called after Vandyke, in whose time armour was undoubtedly worn, as he has shown in a great variety of portraits. But a completely *modern* suit upon young Hamlet, with his father in armour, throws the two characters into different and even remote periods, a confusion which it is absolutely necessary to avoid.

The reason for Shakspeare's dressing the ghost in armour has never been assigned, or nothing beyond the *picturesque* effect derived from it.* Yet it has a very marked and striking propriety, when fully considered. The usual regal dress would have had nothing in it to alarm. The habit of interment would have been horrible. or loathsome, or ridiculous. Now his object seems to have been to excite the strongest attention, and yet not betray the real and ultimate cause of his appearance.

It will be remembered that Fortinbras of Norway had dared the late king to single combat ; and that he had forfeited, along with life, all the "lands which he stood seized "of" to the conqueror. Young Fortinbras, at the opening of this play, had, it seems, levied soldiers to recover the territories so lost by his father. The news had occasioned in Denmark much toilsome watch to the subject, and great martial preparations ; the casting of ordnance at home, and the making large purchases abroad of the implements of war. The people might entertain a reasonable fear, that what their late hero had acquired, would be lost by the less valiant spirit of his brother. The appearance of the late king is conceived, therefore, to relate entirely to the approaching war—for he is observed to wear even the *very* armour he had on, when he combatted the ambitious NORWAY.

> "Well may it sort, that this portentous figure
> "Comes armed through our watch, so like the king,
> "That was, and is, the question of these wars."

The dress, we thus see, was calculated to point solely to the existing, or probable circumstances of the country ; and kept, even from suspicion, the nature of the disclosure that was intended to Hamlet alone.

But whatever the sentinels might think of this appearance, no conception of foul play seems to have occurred to

* See Mr. Steevens's note on the words *complete steel.*

them ; they referred every thing to the fearful events coming upon their countrymen. The spirit, however, resembled their late sovereign ; it seemed to wish communication, but decidedly not to them ; they therefore naturally think of making the affair known to his *son*, which leads to the interview between them, and the unfolding of that awful secret, which had never been anticipated.

Having, I trust, accounted satisfactorily for the dress of the spirit, a few observations may be allowed on the *properties* of the spirit itself. The pneumatology of Shakspeare's age is rather difficult—the writers who exhibit the popular notions, assign to spirits the power to invest themselves with form at pleasure. Form implies matter : dense or rare, it must be substance to be at all an object of vision. When the purpose was answered, the assembled matter resolved itself into air, into thin air, and "what had seemed corporeal, melted as breath into the wind."

So far all was well; be the notion philosophical or not, there is no inconsistency in it, nothing that involves a contradiction : THAT is seen, which had been suitably prepared to become the object of vision. But, as we advance in the play, a new and unexpected property presents itself, which demands a different theory—that of the spirit's being visible and invisible at the same moment. I allude to the return of the royal shade in the closet of the queen, where he is seen and heard by Hamlet, but not at all by his astonished mother, who looks in vain for the object of her son's alarm, and hears questions put, to which no answers seem to be returned.

What a fortunate thing it was for stage effect, that this property of his spectre did not earlier excite our notice. Upon this principle, the ghost might have suddenly refused to the sentinels the power of seeing or hearing any more of him ; and, without drawing off his son to a more removed ground, have wrapt him *there*, before them, in a mysterious colloquy, intelligible only to themselves. Nor, let it be remarked, would this act have been more incongruous, than his invisible and inaudible presence in the queen's closet.

I have said that it was fortunate he did not do so—had he done it, we should have lost the desperation, which leads Hamlet to follow "the extravagant and erring spirit," though it should conduct him to "the summit of the beetling sea-cliff," or put on some "horrible shape" which might drive him into madness. We should have lost our own fearful expectation of the result, till they re-enter before us, and we perceive the prince sinking at last under his apprehensions, and in breathless terror exclaiming,

"Whither wilt thou lead me? speak: I'll go no further:"

we should have been encumbered, too, with persons useless to the scene, and unconscious of its business. But what would have been a blot in the management on the platform, is a beauty when it occurs in the closet—the queen is strongly discriminated by it from her son: she has terrors of a different kind from his; and is convinced, that his agitated mind has at length lost its sovereignty, and thus peoples vacuity with bodiless creations.

Lest, however, any one should fancy that the appearance in the closet is a pure imagination of Hamlet's, though that on the platform was real; and, indeed, such a notion once banished the spirit of Banquo from the banquet—it will be sufficient to show, that this exclusive visibility was an acknowledged property of spirits. Accordingly, Prospero, after assigning to Ariel a particular shape, bids him to go thence and return in it, adding these words:

"Be subject to no sight but *thine* and *mine*,
Invisible to every eyeball else."

I think I have heard of an attempt to deny the parallelism of Banquo's spirit with the shade of Denmark, because the latter *speaks*, in addition to the gestures they have in common. But surely speech may be fancied as well as appearance. In epilepsies, I am told, the patient is convincingly impressed with both.

It is curious to consider how learned men, engaged in the discoveries of science, sometimes become cold to the highest beauties of poetry. A great physician* really seems to regret, that Shakspeare had not *known*, that all such fancied appearances result from the disordered state of the bodily organs. He would then, the doctor thinks, never have made his ghosts *visible* or *audible* on the stage. It being perfectly natural for men in the situation of Hamlet, Macbeth, and Brutus, to fancy such appearances, all would have proceeded in the actual course of nature; and the terror now excited by an idle superstition would be replaced by a becoming sympathy with the effects of the disease. To be sure, my dear doctor, there cannot be the least doubt of it; and long may you continue to prescribe this regimen—to the *French* theatre.

Perhaps the desire to unfold some of the many beauties in the management of this tremendous being, may merit some indulgence; but I cannot repent the effort; for it is surely

* Dr. Alderson on Apparitions.

not irrevelant to my subject; and the acting of Mr. Kemble always invited to the closest study of the excellences of Shakspeare.

I had nearly omitted to mention, that in the wardrobe of a company contemporary with Shakspeare's, was "a robe for to go invisible."

Having incidentally mentioned Mr. Garrick's strange alteration of the play of Hamlet, it may not be here improper to add some account of it. In my youth I remember to have seen it acted, and for many years afterwards I could not get the smallest information, whether any copy was preserved of this unlucky compliment to Voltaire. A strange story was in circulation formerly, that it had been buried with the great actor: this, however, it was said, was not upon the humane principle, that a man's faults should die with him, but as a sort of consecration of so critical a labour.

But Mr. Kemble had in his library what I believe to have been the very copy of the play, upon which Mr. Garrick's alterations were made. He probably received it as a curiosity from Mrs. Garrick, who, I remember, presented to him the cane with which Mr. Garrick walked abroad, and which, as an accession to his vast collection of reliques of that great actor, Mr. Kemble properly bestowed upon Charles Matthews.

He cut out the voyage to England, and the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, "who had made love to his employment, and marshalled his way to knavery." He omitted the funeral of Ophelia, and all the wisdom of the prince, and the rude jocularity of the grave-diggers. Hamlet bursts in upon the king and his court, and Laertes reproaches him with his father's and his sister's deaths. The exasperation of both is at its height, when the king interposes; he had commanded Hamlet to depart for England, and declares that he will no longer bear this rebellious conduct, but that his wrath shall at length fall heavy upon the prince. "First," exclaims Hamlet, "feel you mine:" and he instantly stabs him. The queen rushes out imploring the attendants to save her from her son. Laertes, seeing treason and murder before him, attacks Hamlet to revenge his father, his sister, and his king. He wounds Hamlet mortally, and Horatio is on the point of making Laertes accompany him to the shades, when the prince commands him to desist, assuring him that it was the hand of Heaven, which administered by Laertes "that precious balm for all his wounds." We then learn that the miserable mother had dropt in a trance ere she could reach her chamber-door, and Hamlet implores for her "an hour of

penitence ere madness ends her." He then joins the hadns of Laertes and Horatio, and commands them to unite their virtues (as a coalition of ministers) to "calm the troubled land." The old couplet, as to the bodies, concludes the play.

All this is written in a mean and trashy common-place manner, and, in a word, sullied the page of Shakspeare, and disgraced the taste and judgment of Mr. Garrick.

There are upon this copy of Hamlet evidences of some unpardonable liberties taken by another great actor, Mr. Betterton. The play itself was printed in 1703, and the passages omitted in the representation were denoted by inverted commas. After all the elaborate description of Betterton's address to the ghost, this is the way in which that address is exhibited as spoken on the stage:

> "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
> What may this mean,
> That thou dead corse again in complete steel," &c.

All the solemn gradations by which Hamlet adjures the spirit, (so dear to an actor, who can discriminate,) were omitted. He employs no terrible or soothing terms—he treats him with neither ceremony nor affection, but after having commended himself to the care of angelic guards, at once asks the apparent shade of his father what he means by disturbing them? And it now occurs to me, that what Cibber complained of, that some Hamlets absolutely *bullied the ghost*, could only have proceeded from this brutal omission of the very lines, that would have *taught* them how to approach so awful and mysterious a being.

> "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!—
> (*A considerable pause.*)
> "Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd,—
> Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,
> Be thy intents wicked, or charitable,—
> Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,
> That I will speak to thee; I'll call thee, *Hamlet*,
> King, father, royal *Dane*: O, answer me!
> Let me not burst in ignorance! but tell,
> Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death,
> Have burst their cerements? why the sepulchre,
> Wherein we saw thee quietly interr'd,*
> Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws,
> To cast thee up again? What may this mean?" &c.

* *Interr'd* with the quarto—not *inurn'd* with the folio; a term unsuited to a body not reduced to *ashes*.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Kemble's range of parts at this period very limited.—The Black Prince.—His sister, Miss E. Kemble.—Mrs. Siddons and her amazing exertions.—Her original appearance in 1775.—*Mr. Siddons.—The published acknowledgment of the great actress.—Johnstone in Irish characters. The Yates's.—Whimsical letter of Yates on newspaper hints.—Return of Mrs. Crawford.—Compared with Mrs. Siddons.—Mr. Kemble in Richard III.—Sir Giles Overreach.—King John.—The Critics.—Mr. Kemble's scene with Hubert.—Mrs. Siddons in Constance.—Her majestic sorrows.—Beverly.—The other theatre.—Massinger's picture.—More Ways than One.—Poor Soldier.—State of our Theatres.—Mrs. Siddons in Lady Randolph.—Its beauties.*

Mr. Kemble repeated his Hamlet on the 2d, 4th, 6th, 13th, and, 28th of October.

There was something remarkable in the management of that period, and which would have materially injured any actor but himself. I mean he was expected to keep his ground in tragedy, *alone*, against the amazing attraction of his sister, Mrs. Siddons. On the 8th of October she commenced her performances, that season, with the character of Isabella, by royal command. The regulations of the theatre did not allow Mr. Kemble to dispossess any actor of his accustomed parts. He was not permitted to strengthen either himself or his sister by acting with her. In Isabella the Biron was Smith, who retained also the Osmyn in the Mourning Bride. The Horatio and Lothario of the Fair Penitent were preoccupied, and Mr. Brereton and Mr. Bensley were the Jaffier and Pierre of Venice Preserved. In Jane Shore, Hastings and Dumont were equally and inalienably appropriated. And even on the 3d of November, when Isabella in Measure for Measure was performed by Mrs. Siddons, the Duke was acted by Mr. Smith, and nothing whatever was yielded to Mr. Kemble, on the ground either of his genius or the supposed influence of his sister.

He was therefore compelled to take his position upon some "removed ground," and got up Shirley's Edward the Black

Prince, which had sunk under Garrick; and the wits of the time called the revival a miracle,—the resurrection of the dead. They allowed him the aid of one sister, Miss E. Kemble, a lady of a beautiful figure and very expressive face; but, like Miss F. Kemble (the late Mrs. Twiss), doomed to fade away, before the amazing brilliancy of Mrs. Siddons. They, however, sustained the poet's severest test, to which female beauty and talent could be subjected.

> "O blest with temper, whose unclouded ray
> Can make to-morrow cheerful as to-day;
> She who can love a sister's *charms*, and hear
> A sister's *praises* with unwounded ear."

The Hamlet, notwithstanding, kept its ground, thus thwarted and opposed. It became so clear and undeniable a proof of rare and genuine talent, that Mr. Harris, the ablest of generals, started Henderson's as a rival attraction; and the two greatest actors of their day were drawn into a competition, highly enjoyed by the town, and productive of much dispute, some research, and criticism sometimes vague, and sometimes partial and even blind.

It was a common thing to style the one all nature, and the other all art. To be sure, this was done with strict reciprocity; for two epigrams, I remember, appeared on the same day, addressed to the two Hamlets;—the writers agreeing in the attributes, only bestowing them upon different persons. I cannot be certain that the same muse did not, in this manner, pay court to each of the rivals.

On the first night Mr. Kemble had omitted the instructions to the Players, upon the modest principle, that he must first be admitted a master in the faculty, before he presumed to censure the faults of others.

> "Let such teach others, who themselves excel,
> And censure freely, who have ACTED well."

He restored them afterwards, and gave the lesson very divertingly,—"Some of Nature's *journeymen*," with an arch smile; and becoming graver as he followed it by—"they imitated humanity so abominably."

In the quarrel at the grave, with Laertes, he was at first thought rather too quiet; but he worked it up by degrees to a "towering passion," and finally converted the Ossa of Mr. Barrymore into a mere wart, by throwing his millions of acres against the burning zone. Of rants, mere intended rants, this is one of the best going, and an especial favourite with the *gods* of the theatre.

"Laud we the gods!
And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils." Cymb.

Wo, at all events, to the refinement that would wish to "govern their roaring throats." They may sometimes burst in thunder upon a moment of exquisite and tender feeling; and it is then hard to preserve a philosophic temperament. But nothing can to the actor compensate the *cheer* of their honest unrestrained applause.

I am now more immediately to notice the progress of Mrs. Siddons herself. From the 10th of October, 1782, to the 5th of June, 1783, is a period of 239 days. If we take away the Sundays and those of *lenten* entertainment, there will remain not quite 190 nights of dramatic performance. The amazing strength, as well as ardour, of this great actress, carried her through eighty nights of characters exceedingly trying to her feelings and her constitution. She had repeated,

Isabella	22 times.
Grecian Daughter	11 ditto.
Jane Shore	14 ditto.
Calista	14 ditto.
Belvidera	13 ditto.
Zara	3 ditto.
Fatal Interview (by Hull)	3 ditto.
	80 times.

Her salary at this theatre was at first put greatly below her value; but she looked to a benefit for a larger supply. It was a night free from all charges, and her receipts were said to amount to upwards of 800*l.* The size of the theatre then may be conceived, when I state that it had never before held more than 300*l.* and numerically reckoning the audience at common prices, there was on that night 330*l.* It was the 14th December, 1782; the play was Venice Preserved, and she acted Belvidera.

Nor was this all, for on the 18th March following she had a second benefit, when she performed the character of Zara in the Mourning Bride. Very considerable presents were made her, accompanied by suitable expressions of admiration from persons of rank and talent. Buckingham House had not been wanting in those distinctions which majesty can confer, for Mrs. Siddons was appointed reading preceptress to the young princesses, by her majesty's express command.

However, it became apparent that her health could not sustain any long continuance of such prodigious efforts as she had made during her first season. She frequently fainted

away at the close of her performances, and it was long before she was sufficiently recovered to be supported into her dressing-room. Nor were her effects upon her audiences less distressing. In her latter period, she called upon majesty and energy to supply the place of that exquisite tenderness, with which in her earlier days she had subdued every thing that wore the human form. Upon some comparative babble having reached her in her retirement, she one day said, "To hear these people talk, one would think that I had never excited a tear." Alas! excuse the unthinking idlers, dear and incomparable woman! If in Lady Macbeth the terror you excited was unequalled,—the agony produced by your Isabella, your Belvidera, your Shore, your Mrs. Beverley, as little admitted any rational comparison.

What an astonishing change had taken place in the course of seven years, as to her powers themselves, or the public sense of them, or both! It was on the 29th November, 1775, that she made her first appearance at Drury Lane Theatre in Portia in the Merchant of Venice. It was once only repeated. She acted the Lady Anne in Richard III. to Mr. Garrick's Richard, and under the terror with which he impressed her, hung back a little when they advanced together from the back of the stage. She has been heard to say, that the glance of reproach that he threw at her, was distressing long after to her recollection. He had clearly never seen the genius concealed under her timidity; and her other characters under his management were mere compliments to her personal loveliness. She acted in Colman's revival of Epicæne; the Black-moor washed White, which was damned; Love's Metamorphoses, acted for the benefit of Mrs. Wrighten and Mr. Vernon; Emily in Mrs. Cowley's Runaway, a character rising early and walking in a garden to be courted in a most trifling and apropos way. But this was not the climax of her walking talent; she walked as Venus in the procession of the Jubilee; and, at the end of the season, had the usual courteous permission to walk any where else; or, in plainer language, was discharged.

I remember that Mr. Siddons once told me, that I must not be astonished to hear, that he himself had been of rather greater value in the country than his wife, from his versatility as an acter. The domestic claims upon her exertions seem to have awakened a genius but little suspected, and stimulated that industry, without which in this difficult art even genius will attain but little.

Upon the unprecedented success of her benefit, Mrs. Siddons made her public acknowledgments for the patronage she

had received. It will at all events prove the modest deference with which *then* the greatest merit thought it becoming to address the public; and shall be preserved, as a formulary for talents inferior to her's.

"Mrs. Siddons would not have remained so long without expressing the high sense she had of the great honours done her at her late benefit, but that, after repeated trials, she could not find words adequate to her feelings; and she must at present be content with the plain language of a grateful mind,—that her heart thanks all her benefactors, for the distinguished, and, she fears, too partial encouragement, which they bestowed on this occcasion. She is told, that the splendid appearance on that night, and the emoluments arising from it, exceed any thing ever recorded on a similar account in the annals of the English stage; but she has not the vanity to imagine, that this arose from any superiority over many of her predecessors, or some of her cotemporaries. She attributes it wholly to that liberality of sentiment, which distinguishes the inhabitants of this great metropolis from those of any other in the world. They know her story: they know, that for many years, by a strange fatality, she was confined to move in a narrow sphere, in which the rewards attendant on her labours were proportionally small. With a generosity unexampled, they proposed at once to balance the account, and pay off the arrears due, according to the rate, the too partial rate, at which they valued her talents. She knows the danger arising from extraordinary and unmerited favours, and will carefully guard against any approach of pride, too often their attendant. Happy shall she esteem herself, if, by the utmost assiduity, and constant exertion of her poor abilities, she shall be able to lessen, though hopeless ever to discharge, the vast debt she owes the public.

Drury Lane Theatre,
Dec. 17, 1782."

On the 2d October, 1783, Mr. Johnstone, who had been acting in Dublin at the same time as Mr. Kemble, and whose talent had likewise brought him to London, made his first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre, in Lionel, in the opera of Lionel and Clarissa. His voice was a clear melodious tenor, with a very sweet, though somewhat disproportionate, falsetto; and he sang in a plain and pleasing style, without the slightest affectation or mixture of the foreign graces in music. It was observed, that he spoke quite as well as he sang. His person was genteel, his features expressive, and his manners graceful and easy. Some time

after this he assumed those diverting characters, which had been written for Moody of the other theatre; and performed them in a manner more truly characteristic of their countrymen.

The blunders of the Irish Gentleman proceed from the hilarity of his nature and the hurry of his animal spirits. Moody was the most deliberate, not to say torpid of actors. The confusion of ideas in him, therefore, seemed to have no adequate cause. In Johnstone the cause and consequence were equally and thoroughly apparent. He had a laughing brightness, too, that played about his countenance, and won you before he spoke; and, like Mr. Lewis, his very appearance exhilarated the spectator. Some years after, when I became a frequenter of the green-room, as a dramatic writer, I used to observe a peculiarity in this delightful actor, when he came off the stage, that throws some light upon the obscure subject, HOW an actor feels the character he represents. I mean, not as identical, (supposing himself the character,) but sympathetical, as the audience themselves feel it. On the stage, Mr. Johnstone discovered no enjoyment of the risible blunders that he had been uttering; but the moment he came off at the wing, he used to relieve himself by a scream of laughter, that was the seeming *fine* for the restraint he had put upon his nature.

I have exhibited the decided prevalence of tragedy during the present period, and noticed the policy of the Covent Garden manager, and the stand he made by the aid of Henderson and Miss Younge, against the attractions of Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. He further strengthened himself, by engaging Mrs. Crawford, whose health had required that she should visit the continent, and she speedily appeared at that theatre.

There was another lady of very great talent, who about this time seemed to have some inclination to return to the boards. On Friday the 17th October, a paragraph appeared in the Public Advertiser, which, in the familiar style of that day, stated that "Dick Yates and his wife had retired from the stage with a fortune perhaps much larger than any of their predecessors, except Garrick. At the least it may be computed at 36,000*l.*, or 40,000*l.* Yates and his wife are also remarkable for the comely appearance with which they bear their age; for the age of these old acquaintance of the public is much greater than is usually thought. From theatrical dates, the one must be 70, the other 60 years old."

Perhaps this might be deemed one of those instances of Mr.

Puff's skill in writing people *up*, out of the way. Positive retirement, a handsome fortune, and age that seemed to forbid all further exertion! It threw the comedian into ungovernable fury; and he vented his displeasure against the writer in a letter to the printer of the Public Advertiser, dated the day following: it is by no means ill written, and is very characteristic and entertaining; I therefore preserve it here entire.

"Saturday, 18th October, 1783.

"SIR,

"Though it is not my profession to write, but to retail the writings of others, yet I find the spirit move me to hazard some observations on a very good-humoured, sprightly, elegant paragraph in your paper of yesterday.

"The facetious gentleman is pleased to say, that Yates and his wife have retired from the stage with 36,000*l.* or 40,000*l.*, and that they are remarkable for their comely appearance, though one is, from theatrical dates, 70, the other above 60 years of age. 'Tis wonderful so wise a man should be mistaken, but the facts are,

"They have not retired with 40,000*l.*

"They have not retired at all.

"Theatrical dates do not prove them to be, the one 70, the other more than 60 years of age.

"In respect to myself, that I am remarkable for my comely appearance; that I can (though not worth quite 40,000*l.*) eat my mutton without an engagement, and yet owe no man any thing, are offences to which I am ready to plead guilty: if comeliness is a sin, heaven help me, I say! and as to owing no man any thing, in these days when it is the genteelest thing in the world to pay no man any thing, I must e'en stand trial before a jury of honest tradesmen, who, I dare say, will acquit me, from the singularity of the case.

"In respect to theatrical dates, I have, to be sure, told the chimes at midnight some five and thirty years ago, which, as I find myself just as healthy and alert as in those delightful days, I do not think at all disqualifies me for my general cast of characters, in which I have pleased as good judges as your correspondent; nor is it absolutely necessary that the Miser, Fondlewife, Gomez, Don Manuel, Sir Wilful Witwou'd, &c. should have the first down of a beard on their chins; but I will whisper something in the gentleman's ear, that whilst such writers as he are allowed to assassinate honest people in the dark, by abusive anonymous paragraphs, nobody that

has mutton to eat will look out for theatrical engagements, but quietly let the stage fall into that happy state

'When one Egyptian darkness covers all.'

So much for myself; and now for Mrs. Yates.

"That she is a pretty enough actress, as times go, and by no means uncomely, I willingly allow; but that she is more than 60, or will be these dozen years at least, may bear something of a doubt. As her first appearance was on Drury Lane stage, and in the full meridian of its glory, the date is easily ascertained; but to save the gentleman trouble, as he seems a bad calculator, I will inform him it was in Mr. Crisp's Virginia, in the year 1754, (9 years ago,) and that she was then as pretty a plump, rosy Hebe, as one shall see in a summer's day.

"She had the honour (an honour never conferred on any other person) of being introduced, as a young beginner, by a prologue written and spoken by that great master, Mr. Garrick, in which the following lines are to the present purpose:—

"'If novelties can please, to night we've two,—
Tho' English both, yet spare 'em as they're new.—
To one at least your usual favour show;
A female asks it, can a man say no?
Should you indulge our novice yet unseen,
And crown her with your hands a tragic queen:
Should you with smiles a confidence impart,
To calm those fears which speak a feeling heart;
Assist each struggle of ingenuous shame,
Which curbs a genius in its road to fame;
With one wish more her whole ambition ends—
She hopes some merit to deserve such friends.'

"And now give me leave, sir, to tell your correspondent a story.—On the first coming to England of Signor Trebbi, a worthy gentleman, the editor of a newspaper, paid him a morning visit, and informed him he was a public writer, and had characters of all prices. "I understand you, Sir," said Trebbi, "and have heard of you: I have no guineas to throw away so ill; but I am a writer too; *et voila ma plume!*"—"This is my pen," showing him a good English oaken towel. Signor Trebbi was so good as to leave me his pen, the only one I shall make use of against malevolence in future, where the writer does me the honour of making himself known to me.

I am, Sir,
Your most obedient humble servant,
RICHARD YATES."

It may be amusing to notice, in passing, the vast exaggeration of self-love. Mrs. Yates was a most graceful and beautiful woman, and her musical declamation yet rings delightfully in my ear. Her Andromache was one of the most classical things in the world. Yates himself was the blunt, rude son of nature, upon whom no refinement seemingly could ever be engrafted; but admirable in his quality. But he really thinks, from their retirement, that the stage was about to fall into a state of Egyptian darkness and hopeless degeneracy. It would injure his memory to record the names of those, who at that time enlightened it.

Every thing at Covent Garden bore the semblance of great vigour. The attendance at rehearsals was now enforced by fines extending through all ranks of the *dramatis personæ*. Half a crown was levied if the performer did not arrive during the first act;—half a guinea if the whole of the play had been unattended. And on the 13th of November Mrs. Crawford actually returned, after an absence of five years. She chose for her first appearance Lady Randolph in Douglas, a character which her great rival had not acted in London.

She looked still a fine woman, though time, while it had taken something from the elegance of her figure, had also begun to leave its impression upon her features. It soon appeared the great actresses were of very different schools; that what was unimpassioned in the dialogue was somewhat rapidly given by Mrs. Crawford, who evidently reserved herself for striking effects. While Mrs. Siddons seemed to consider that every thing in the part she played required the utmost care; and that where declamation was not to be lifted by passion, it was to charm by a kind of tender and melancholy music, disposing the soul to the superior effects when they arose. Although no comparison could be made except as to the general style of the two artists, it was yet not very difficult to anticipate in what points they would be found to differ in the performance of the character in question.

The voice of Mrs. Crawford was somewhat harsh, and what might be termed broken. In level speaking it resembled the tone of passion in other speakers. It was at no time agreeable to the ear; but when thrown out by the vehemence of her feeling, it had a transpiercing effect, that seemed absolutely to wither up the hearer:—it was a flaming arrow; it was the lightning of passion. Such was the effect of her almost shriek to old Norval,

"Was he alive?"

It would be ungenerous to ask, whether even a mother, hanging with breathless terror over every word of the old shepherd's narrative, could summon force enough for such an explosion? The fact was, that reason here had nothing to do. It was an electric shock, that drove the blood back from the surface suddenly to the heart, and made you cold and shuddering with terror in the midst of a crowded theatre.

Henderson acted old Norval for the first time. There is nothing but simple affection in the character, but in the only fine scene in the play, the discovery to the mother, Henderson acted fully up to Mrs. Crawford, and the sympathy of the audience vibrated equally between them. Lewis, always gallant and graceful, if he was not eloquent, gained on that night credit even by his tragedy.

The fame of Mrs. Crawford five years before at that theatre brought to the house a number of fashionable and intelligent admirers of the art: and the applause was commensurate with the exertion upon the stage. The public beheld a great accession to their stock of rational delight; and the manager found that he had at last something, which would bear a positive opposition to the great tragedian of the other house. There were many, who, running a kind of parallel, such as Dr. Johnson wrote between Dryden and Pope, came to a somewhat similar result. "If the flights of Crawford," said they, "are higher, Siddons continues longer on the wing. If of Crawford's fire the blaze is brighter, of Siddons's the heat is more regular and constant. The one often surpasses expectation, and the other never falls below it. Crawford is heard with frequent astonishment, and Siddons with perpetual delight." But I confess, leaving the parallel as I find it, I never could perceive, with some, that Mrs. Siddons had less genius, because she had more art. She only seemed to me to have a more masterly control over every part of her subject. It must not be forgotten too, that Mrs. Siddons was in the prime of life, not thirty; that in addition to powerful feelings and harmonious speech, she had a person of great dignity, and a face of astonishing expression; that her very action was a language, and her attitudes models for the statuary and the painter.

Mr. Kemble, on the 6th of November, appeared in the character of King Richard III. It had then, by no means the effect, which he subsequently gave to it; and I reserve myself, as to this character, for a later period of his life, when there will be a necessity to compare him with two competitors in the part. The dreadful energy of Garrick was fully

in the recollection of many of his audience, and of all the critical part. What they found in Kemble was greater *subtlety* than had usually been displayed; with another feature, which had rarely been supposed an ingredient in Richard's character at all.

A too apparent CUNNING, broadly marked out to the spectator, Kemble always thought improper, and *vulgar* in acting. He rightly conceived that the daring "Son of York," who deceived so many, and moulded all to his purposes, must have been refined in his manners, and, indeed, every thing to all men. His *address*, therefore, was by Kemble studiously fashioned and nicely varied. What he seemed to want most, was that concentrated force of body and of voice, that could carry him through near four hours of a character, never five minutes off the stage; and of which the demand for the greatest power arises precisely at the time when the actor from previous exertion must be exhausted.

On the 14th of the same month, he carried, as Massinger had done, Richard the Third into Comedy, and acted Sir Giles Overreach in the New Way to Pay Old Debts. With all my admiration of Kemble, I never thought his Sir Giles to be named with Henderson's. He had not the bustle, the ardour, the grasp of the man; and his exultation was not so triumphant as Henderson's. The fancy of the latter seemed to make an empress of his daughter, and bid the whole world worship the idol, that he had framed and set up. He was greater too, I thought, in the scene with the parchment deeds, which he finds blank; the ink that conveyed the lands having been extracted. The manager on this night lent him the *support* of an air balloon, which was introduced into the pantomime to amuse the crowd. He repeated his Hamlet on the following evening. It had become a permanent possession for the theatre.

He had also to prepare himself in King John, their majesties being desirous of seeing the brother and sister together. Old Mr. Sheridan came to his lodgings with great kindness, and read the character over to him; I suppose very nearly as he used to play it. I never thought much of this mode of assistance; and am apt to consider the conceptions only *exactly* suited to the person who forms them: that you never thoroughly succeed in making one man act by the judgment of another. I looked surprised, I believe, when he told me the fact. But I asked him how Sheridan read the character? and he answered, "Very finely."

In King John, the critics said he was too artificial, and too cold. In the great scene with Hubert, they found him too

solemn and monotonous. But enough of this *too* much regarded nonsense. The most cold-blooded, hesitating, cowardly and creeping villany, that ever abused the gift of speech, found in Mr. Kemble the only powers competent to give it utterance. And if I were to select a scene, in the whole compass of the drama, more appropriated to him than any other, I should, I think, fix upon this noiseless horror, this muttered suggestion of slaughterous thought, on which the midnight bell alone was fitted to break, by one solitary undulating sound, that added to the gloom.

The scene where he was parched up by the poison was equally skilful. As to the Constance of Mrs. Siddons, the taunts to Austria were the especial favourites. But I am clearly of opinion, that among the finest things she ever did, are to be numbered the majestic sorrows—the look—the mode of taking the earth as a throne—the pride of soul, with which she prepared, deserted and devoted as she found herself, to shame the assembled sovereigns, who had so basely abandoned her cause. The lines of Shakspeare, it is true, suggest it all; but never did the grand conceptions of a poet find more congenial imagination, never perhaps *equal* powers to embody the creation of his fancy. The lines cannot be omitted, which she spoke.

> "*Sal.* Pardon me, Madam,
> I may not go without you to the kings.
> "*Const.* Thou may'st, thou shalt, I will not go with thee.
> I will instruct my sorrows to be proud;
> For grief is proud, and makes his owner stout.
> To me, and to the state of my great grief,
> Let kings assemble; for my grief's so great,
> That no supporter but the huge firm earth
> Can hold it up; here I and sorrow sit;
> Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it."

The lamentation for her "pretty Arthur" was, as might be imagined, one of the most affecting things in the world. It might have been supposed, that no being but a mother could have written this exquisitely tender passage. Mr. Malone has conjectured that the exclamations of Constance were the "*verae voces pectore ab imo*" of the poet himself, who at the writing of this play had to lament the loss of his only son. It might be so: but he never seemed to find the slightest difficulty in drawing from his fancy alone the genuine expression of any passion incident to our nature.

In order to keep the really great efforts in succession, I have passed over the Gamester, which was performed on the 22d of November—the husband and wife by himself and his

sister. As there is in the character of Beverly little discrimination, it could only claim the notice of Mr. Kemble from its *pathos*. It is a human being under the influence of a strong infatuation, which leads him ultimately to his ruin. The gamester is a selfish and a childish wretch, who considers only his own gratification, and is the dupe of the most shallow imposition. He really has no affections; he would be cured, if he had them. There is a moral error in the very endeavour to render such a being amiable. Amiable! the scoundrel who throws at hazard for unneeded splendour, against the absolute misery of a whole family! But let us not waste a word to demonstrate what is self-evident. In the closing scenes Mr. Kemble was deeply affecting; and if the wretched victims of that passion ever could be reclaimed, such an exhibition might be of the utmost moment—but the play may deter, though it cannot reclaim. The domestic distress, the wakeful, watching agonies, the unbounded affection of the wife, as exhibited by Mrs. Siddons, dissolved the audience into tears—but powerful as the interest is, the play is but a *tragedie bourgeoise*. It is lifted neither by time, the action not being remote; nor by elevated character—nor by the third grand resort of the poet, the language. It is therefore but every day distress, in common dialogue, and, however affecting, below the dignity of the tragic muse. These two great tragedians repeated the play seven times in the course of the season.

At Covent Garden Theatre an alteration of Massinger's Picture claims to be noticed. With great absurdity the play begins to be called the *Magic Picture* precisely when the picture ceased to be magical. What necessity there can be for thus lowering the splendid fictions of a former age to the narrow credibility of modern times, I could never see. Nobody wants the audience to believe an incident more than *dramatically* probable or possible; and this may always be secured by suitable preparation. The imagination is of all things soonest won to its principal gratification—the strange, the wonderful.

By the present alteration, the picture became a common portrait—the husband only a jealous man, "who fancied things that were not;" and thus, purified too in its grosser scenes, Massinger supplied a second drama to the modern stage. There were some slight songs and a chorus added, and it for a few nights answered the purposes of the theatre.

Mrs. Crawford repeated her Lady Randolph several times—gave her Euphrasia, in the Grecian Daughter, on the 27th of November, with very great applause; and, on the 11th of December, opposed her great rival also in Belvidera.

On the 6th of December, Mrs. Cowley's comedy called More Ways than One, was acted for the first time at Covent Garden Theatre. It had a good deal of bustle and intricacy, though the ground-work of the structure was extremely simple. Dr. Fee-love, a physician, has a niece, with whom the hero of the comedy determines to be in love. He introduces himself to their acquaintance, as a patient in the last stage of an atrophy. The doctor pronounces his case a hopeless one, but the lover does not despair—indeed he has no great difficulty in prevailing upon the lady to return his affection with mutual ardour, and she agrees to elope with the patient, to avoid a match with a subject less agreeable. They contrive to send the doctor to Hampstead, the while, upon a feeless visit; and having staked his whole credit as a physician, that the patient could not be restored to health, he consents to their union, to preserve his skill from open impeachment. There is a second plot, equally slight, which produces a second union. The comic force of the piece was the physician acted by Quick, and Sir Marvel Mushroom, a character for Edwin; the latter is a person anxious to display his knowledge in history, but forever confusing and misapplying names, characters, dates and events. It is probable Mrs. Cowley had seen something like this in some retired tradesman, who having indisputably a large fortune, was ambitious of a fame which he could afford to be without.

The liveliness of Mrs. Cowley could contrive to work very entertaining matter out of materials such as these. Her dialogue is gay though not witty. But she was loudly applauded for a sentiment, which I hope, and think I know, to be groundless: "That the purer virtue is in a female, the nearer it is to its destruction." The purest virtue is that which has been tried and triumphs over seduction. Confidence may be destroyed, because it is too proud or ignorant to estimate the danger. Purity of virtue is not to be inferred from the mere absence of all suspicion. This is artless innocence, the usual prey of the vicious. The purest virtue

> "Is woman's firm obedience fully tried,
> Through all temptation, and the tempter foil'd
> In all his wiles, defeated and repuls'd."

At a future opportunity, in the course of this work, I shall state my personal observation of this lady's fine qualities, and allude to the friendship with which she honoured me, her conversation and peculiarly pleasing manners. Dr. Johnson has said, that the mind is led to some particular pursuit by circumstances forgotten or remembered. In Mrs. Cowley, what

led her to poetry *was* remembered, and is sufficiently obvious —her grandmother was the first cousin of Gay. Her father, Mr. Parkhurst, was himself an excellent classical scholar. Every thing about her was conducive to her progress in literature. Her *Runaway* was accepted by Mr. Garrick in 1776, and her most diverting farce of "*Who's the Dupe?*" was received by Sheridan in 1779. Her *Belle's Stratagem*, the best of her comedies, was produced at Covent Garden in the year 1780, and is likely ever to be there.

This season Mr. O'Keefe re-produced his *Shamrock*, with many additions, and some omissions, under the title of *The Poor Soldier:* the success of this afterpiece was unbounded; it has been the nearly constant attraction in every English theatre from that time to this, and while the comic talent of our stage supplies a Darby, it can never fail. The original performer of this character was Edwin, and his effect in it cannot be described. Every reader knows the incident of his discovering the wound upon Patrick the soldier's forehead? but the look, with which he resigned his pretensions to becoming a hero, baffles all description. Mrs. Kennedy, though a bad figure, acted Patrick on account of the singular quality of her voice, a beautiful tenor; the song "How happy the soldier," became a surprising favourite with the town; it saluted you in all companies, it walked through every street, before you or behind you; blated out from the hand-organ, and buzzed away from the wheel of the hurdy-gurdy. Johnstone also, with a sweetness never surpassed, established the fame of two beautiful ballads, "Sleep on, sleep on," and the "Brown Jug." Shield, then the first of melodists, gave the music.

Mr. O'Keefe is still living I hear, but blind, and I fear, very far from comfortable in his circumstances: by the better arrangements of the French drama, an author so popular would have a fortune to receive, and to bequeath at his decease.

The state of our great theatres, is a curious problem. The rewards to author's are inconsiderable, the proprietors are in perpetual difficulties, the scale of expense is enormous, and as to the theatres themselves, either from want of art in the construction, or an erroneous notion of the *proper* attraction, the work is never done. We have hardly read the praise of the architect, when it is found that he knew nothing of the *principle*, or failed in its application if he did. Theatres become vast from speculation, miscalculating both means and ends: they are made glittering and gaudy, because our spectators love to be an exhibition themselves. The genuine

drama is banished; because, to give its former pleasure, every word must be distinctly heard, every gesture accurately perceived. Music triumphantly reigns over the subject reason of the country, and her handmaid, procession, fills her court with endless and glaring frippery. While I am writing this paragraph, a singer is absolutely deliberating whether he shall accept the sum of two thousand five hundred pounds for five weeks' performance.

But to return to the regular course of this narrative.

Mrs. Siddons did not at all avoid the closest comparison with her great rival. Accordingly, on the 22d December, for her own benefit, she appeared for the first time in the character of Lady Randolph. I cannot say that she never saw Mrs. Crawford act the part: she however played it, to all appearance, purely from her own conception. I remember the curiosity I felt to see her, and I still feel how amply that curiosity was repaid. As a preliminary remark, the reader will allow me to say, that this great actress always impressed you powerfully with the scope of the character she performed, the moment you first beheld her. Her deportment conveyed the mind and circumstances of the being she represented. In Lady Randolph she wore the traces of sorrows that admitted of no cure. In a viduary state, she had accepted the protection of a second husband. Her affections had been buried in the grave of the first.

I was struck with the profound melancholy of her speech to Anna.

> "Didst thou not ask, what had my sorrows been
> If I in early youth, had lost a husband?
> In the cold bosom of the earth is lodg'd,
> Mangl'd with wounds, the husband of my youth;
> And in some cavern of the ocean lies
> My child and his."

There was a very fine moral impression in the insisting upon *sincerity*, a little farther on, as the first of virtues.

In the second act nothing ever surpassed, in grace and benignity, her attention to young Norval's narrative. The comment she makes, upon the change of his fortune, and the opening horizon of his prospects, was closed sublimely by the two lines,

> "On this my mind reflected while you spake,
> And bless'd the wonder-working hand of Heaven."

And the comparison of herself with the supposed happy mother of Norval,

"Whilst I—to a dead husband bore a son,
And to the roaring waters gave my child."

In the following scene with Glenalvon, the amazing intelligence of her look, and the action of her right arm, when she uttered

"I have not *found* so: thou art KNOWN to me,"

were a volume of communication to a base and mastered spirit.

The third act introduced old Norval; and the utmost anxiety was felt around me, as to the mode in which she would deliver the famous

"Was he alive?"

Shakspeare shall say how. As one, then,—

"Who almost dead for breath, had scarcely more
Than would make up the question."

Her admirers seemed to regret, that she had lost the great burst: but she had only changed its place; and pierced every bosom with the tones in which she exclaimed,

"Inhuman that thou art!
How could'st THOU kill, what waves and tempests spar'd?"

The triumphant burst at last,

"'Tis he! 'tis he himself! it is my son!"

only her own organ could convey.

The fourth act had its full share of these beautiful and finished efforts. For instance, when showing the jewels, which Norval recognizes to have been his father's. The mournful iteration of the word, and the pathos that succeeded it, were modulated with the truest ear, or rather the keenest feeling in the world.

"Thy *father's*, say'st thou?—ah! they WERE thy father's."

Her admiration of the personal beauty of Douglas,

"Yet in my prime, I equall'd not thy father;"

had a singular attraction, coming from a woman so grand and yet so lovely. Mrs. Siddons once directed my atten-

tion to the somewhat similar description of Bertram's beauty, by Helena, in "All's well that ends well."

In the fifth act, of highest value were the *tender cautions*, to repress the youthful, headlong valour of her son.

> "Lord Randolph, hear me! all shall be thine own;
> But spare! oh spare my son!"

gave almost insupportable agony to the audience—this, followed by the exulting transport, "He lives! he lives!" were *her* triumph and nature's.

But the gloomy absorption that followed his death—

> "Of thee, I think not; what have I to do
> With thee, or any thing?—my son! my son!
> My BEAUTIFUL! my brave!"

It is worthy of record that the word *beautiful*, from Mrs. Siddons, had all the fascination it describes. She had the feeling of an artist, it seemed, combined with that of a mother.

The concluding line of the character, as Mrs. Siddons gave it, was—

> "For such a son,
> And such a husband, *drive me to my fate.*"

Mr. Steevens ridiculed it successfully; but the actress who prefers Home's "make a woman bold," will find her exit somewhat weakened by it. I have thus attempted to mark the most striking, or most applauded passages of the performance; but I am sensible that the great charm of all, which may be admired, but produces no applause, is that unity of the character, that absence of self, that fixed attention to the whole business of the scene, which were peculiar to this great actress. Though nearly half the season was over, she repeated Lady Randolph six times. Brereton acted Douglas; Bensley, Norval; and Palmer, Glenalvon.

The reader will not be displeased to find here the first cast of this play in London. Barry was the Douglas; Sparks, the Norval; Smith, Glenalvon; Ridout, Lord Randolph; the Lady Randolph, Mrs. Woffington; Anna, Mrs. Vincent. —14*th March*, 1757.

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Abington.—Her Lady Betty Modish.—Lillo.—Comedy of Reparation.—Mrs. Cargill, lost in the Pacquet, returning from India.—Details of that Event.—Mrs. Siddons in the Countess of Salisbury.—Hall Hartshorn, whether the real Author of that Play.—Her next choice, Thompson's Sigismunda.—The Prologue to this Play examined.—Mrs. Siddons's performance of the Heroine, its Beauties.—Exhibition of her Portrait in the Tragic Muse.—Mr. Kemble never sat to Sir Joshua Reynolds.—Compared at that time with his Sister.—His Habits and Studies.—Love of Accuracy.—Macnally's Robin Hood.—Commemoration of Handel.—Cowper's Censure Controverted.—Ardour of Mrs. Siddons.—Mrs. Abington.—Lord Mansfield.—Macklin.—The great Decision as to the Rights of Audience and Actor.

Mrs. Abington, after the Christmas holidays, made her first appearance for the season in Lady Betty Modish, in the Careless Husband. In my opinion nothing in the art ever went beyond this performance. It is not a little singular, that this great actress never should have excited an imitator. Of all the Lady Bettys of the time, no one reminded me that she had ever seen her act or heard her speak; and this, by the way, is a solitary instance. Every other excellent performer was admired and copied by the juvenile candidate for fame. Her taste, her ease, her grace, her point, her humour, were unattainable.

On the 10th of February, Lillo's most horrible tragedy of the Fatal Curiosity was brought out, augmented by Mr. Mackenzie in a style sufficiently similar. Henderson and Mrs. Stephen Kemble rendered the audience completely miserable.

Miles Peter Andrews, more fashionable as a writer of Epilogues for the plays of others, than for his own comedies, produced at Drury Lane, on the 14th of February, a play called Reparation. This reparation is the legal marriage, in the fifth act, of a most amiable woman, who had been the victim of a pretended marriage, before the commencement of the play. Mrs. Siddons conferred the said character upon Miss Farren, who struggled through five acts of

very heavy and disgusting incidents: the author was too fond of dishonourable attachments; for that to which I have alluded was not the only one in the play. Among a crowd of indiscretions, the author had the folly to allude to what was at that time called *back stairs influence*. In other words, his majesty's change of his confidential servants. The expressions used begat a contest, and the author did not suffer by his own explosion, which, considering his profession, a gunpowder merchant, was beyond all reasonable calculation. Perhaps his politics saved his play.

Captain Topham wrote both prologue and epilogue, replete with the usual points of the time; and, indeed, they are by no means unentertaining,—the taste for mature beauty—the luxuries of debate—the India Interest—Pacchierotti—Vestris—the *dieu*—and the dogs of the dance.

About the end of the month of February, Mrs. Cargill perished off Scilly, in the Nancy pacquet, returning from the East Indies. She was the original Clara in the Duenna; was a very delightful singer, and one of the most captivating women of her time: but the head was not strong enough to regulate the conduct of the charmer, and she occasionally filled the page of scandal.

It may, perhaps, be proper to exhibit a fuller account of her conduct, and her fate, for the chance of recalling others to a just sense of their danger.

This lovely creature was found floating, in her *chemise*, as she had lain in her bed, and in her arms, inseparably clasped, the infant of which she had been delivered. The maternal instinct had not yielded even to death itself.

By a very early display of vocal and even comic talent, she had become an amazing favourite with the public. She increased in beauty as she advanced in her profession, and became an object of attraction to the dissolute. She at length eloped from her father's house, and I well knew the man who triumphed in her seduction. Her maiden name was Brown, and her father was a respectable tradesman, who was made miserable by her indiscretion. At length, tired even of disorder, she married; but her choice was, as might be expected, little advantageous to her; and she became a voluntary exile, in consequence, from her native land, and arrived in India, with a view to professional exertion, in a country that has wealth, at all events, to lavish upon amusement. She acted at Bombay several nights, with such a company as could be got together, and even went so far as to try the Grecian Daughter for her own benefit. It was solely for her own benefit, for she was totally inadequate to such a charac-

ter. Her Eliza, in the Flitch of Bacon, a little reconciled the spectators to a temperature that was insufferable. The tickets had been put as high as two guineas each, and five hundred persons were too closely collected together.

The India Company, it appeared, had instructed the Council to send her back to Europe; but her residence in India would have been connived at, and she might have acquired an immense fortune, if she would have proceeded to Bengal; but her attachment to captain Haldane seemed then to supersede every other consideration, and she determined to return with him to England. On the 20th of September, she acted again Maria in the Citizen, and her former part in the Flitch of Bacon. Her attraction was unbounded.

She was, however, another *Manon L'Escaut*, and the Abbe Prevost might have drawn his heroine from Mrs. Cargill. She was preparing to run from the very man, for whom fortune honourably acquired was a cheap and vulgar sacrifice. Before leaving Madras, her protector had been invited to dine with a large party at captain Dempster's; but entertaining some doubt of the syren's fidelity, he commanded a trusty servant to pay particular attention to her conduct. As he was sitting down to dinner, his suspicions were confirmed; intelligence was brought to him, that an elopement was certainly in agitation. He quitted the room abruptly, and found the fair deceiver just on the point of stepping into a carriage, that had been prepared to receive her by Mr. L., a writer in the company's service. She promised every thing for the future, and he forgave her levity. A confidential friend of his received her in a sort of honourable custody, and in a few days they sailed together in the Nancy pacquet for Europe, which was lost off Scilly, as has been related. Her body had been seven days under water. Her remains were buried at Scilly, by a private gentleman, at his own expense; and at his charge were interred fourteen of her fellow sufferers and two infants. He caused as accurate descriptions as could be taken of the bodies to be drawn upon the spot, and carried a copy of them to London himself, to assist the friends of the parties in ascertaining their loss.

This melancholy expiation of all her errors left a tender regret for her loss, which outlived the usual duration of such tributes to the public favourites.

Some difficulty seemed to be felt by the management of Drury Lane Theatre to diversify the performances of Mrs. Siddons. She acted three times the Countess of Salisbury, in Hall Hartshorn's tragedy so called: and certainly she played the character very finely; but this gentleman had not

the powers which such an actress required. However, whatever were his powers, they were singularly questioned. The celebrated Dr. Leland was suspected to have assisted him in the composition of the present, his only tragedy. But one proof that he was not the real author of the play, is extremely curious. An acquaintance complimented him upon the happy manner in which he had appropriated a speech from Homer—it is in the seventeenth book, and contains an allusion to Andromache's unarming Hector on his return from battle. Mr. Hartshorn denied that he had drawn any part of his materials from Homer; and this it seems was an identical passage. It was therefore inferred, that, not knowing what his own play contained, he could not have been the author. But the true inference was, that so natural a circumstance, as a wife's aiding to unarm her hero, would occur to every author writing on such a subject; and the expressions are so remote, as to have nothing in common. Surely a man must be very ambitious of detecting plagiarism, and uncommonly doubtful of modern talent, who could so reason upon a very trite passage, written too by a gentleman who had been educated by Dr. Leland.

The next choice for Mrs. Siddons was Sigismunda, in Thomson's Tancred and Sigismunda. I cannot think that even this was a happy one. Perhaps something more than youthful passion was always inferred from the considerate grandeur of her general manner, and the mature intelligence of her expression. But the play offered a variety of a gentle and pleasing character. Garrick, too, had been fond of the part of Tancred, and every body loved the author of the Seasons.

The prologue to this play merits particular notice, for it expresses the author's own notions of the stage, at the time he wrote—what it had escaped from, and what he hoped might yet render it a source of elegant and rational amusement. He considered the stage to be then chaste and corrected: that no tinsel arts would longer conceal the want of genuine nature: the spell of the magician was dissolved, and that wand was broken, which used to waft you over sea and land: fairies and demons, the light and heavy troops of superstition, had faded from the view, and the ghost was bound in chains, that were never at curfew time to be again broken. Nor was the mere mortal bustle of the old stage allowed to these most rational times. The close-wedged battle was to be fought no longer by the prompter's troops: the awful senate itself could seldom be convened; the yawning fathers were condemned to nod behind the scenes. Nor did the mo-

dern reformers show more forbearance as to the diction of poetry: the glittering false sublime was in course rejected by taste so pure; maids could not sigh in metaphor, nor die in rhyme. Rant was tumbled from his beloved gallery throne: descriptions, dreams, and even similies were abandoned.

But they still hoped to catch the lightning of Shakspeare's sublimity, or his deep knowledge of the human heart, the tender wo of Otway, and the pomp and golden lines of Rowe. The critic hazards but little who shall assert, that to an age, which banishes so much, little of what remained would be attainable. From Thomson's times to the present, even Rowe had neither been equalled nor approached. But as those critical days had really refined themselves out of all amusement, some of the proscribed powers have by degrees returned to their old stations, reinforced by superior machinery, and the most costly decoration. We at least *can* make up a show, and prefer it to barren declamation in the style of French tragedy.

Tancred and Sigismunda is the only play by Thomson, that is even occasionally heard upon the modern stage. There are some contrasts of feeling, of which Mrs. Siddons availed herself. There is no doubt, however, that her few words upon the introduction of Osmond, at the close of the third act, equalled any effort of this great actress. The deliquium which overpowered her senses, so accurately given, and the surprising grace of the address upon her recovery, "Forgive my weakness," it is impossible to omit, in this record of beauties, that can never be described. It was by no means so difficult to manage the interview of explanation with Tancred, after she is the wife of Osmond. The last strange and somewhat indecorous intrusion of the king into her private apartment—the apostrophe to the scene of repose itself; and Tancred's entrance by the "secret way which his love had formerly contrived," for the purpose of passing their hours in vows of everlasting affection, excite a something of the risible in the grosser moderns, little accustomed to such cloistered purity. The death from the sword of Osmond is, however, the most natural occurrence in the world, and one of the most affecting; inasmuch as Sigismunda perishes for an imagined dereliction of her conjugal duties, at the very moment that she gives the brightest proof, that they overbalance in her breast the ardent passion she yet feels for Tancred.

At this time, that admirable judge of art, Mr. Burke, was a frequent attendant upon Mrs. Siddons. He was present at the Sigismunda, and led the applause with the usual ar-

dour of his sensibility. He has left a few words as a tribute to her excellence, written at a time when he was all but engrossed by the French revolution. He is alluding to the savage triumph of Dr. Price, upon the virtual dethronement of Louis XVI. "Some tears," says he, "might be drawn from me, if such a spectacle were exhibited on the stage. I should be truly ashamed of finding in myself that superficial theatric sense of painted distress, whilst I could exult over it in real life. With such a perverted mind, I could never venture to show my face at a tragedy. People would think the tears that Garrick formerly, or that SIDDONS not long since, have extorted from me, were the tears of hypocrisy: I should know them to be the tears of folly."—*Reflections*, 1790, p. 120.

Among the triumphs of Mrs. Siddons this year is to be noticed the completion and exhibition of her portrait as the Tragic Muse, by Sir Joshua Reynolds. There were persons, at one time, who affected to doubt the sincerity of that great artist, in his praises of Michael Angelo. But this picture alone proves the intimate feeling by Sir Joshua of his sublime conceptions. Whoever looks at Volpato's engraving of the prophet Joel, one of the sublime series of sybils and prophets in the Sistine Chapel at Rome, will see what he has used, and admire his use of it, in the fine composition of the Tragic Muse. The sway and balance of the figures are the same. The magnificent effect of the drapery, suggested by the Italian, is rivalled by the increased facility afforded to the English artist by the female habiliments. The management of the arms is entirely different, as the prophet is reading a scroll, which he spreads with both his hands, and the muse is in an attitude of inspiration, the object of which is sufficiently denoted by the attendant figures at the back of the throne, who, with well-contrasted dejection and horror, support the dagger and the bowl, the usual expedients of dramatic catastrophe. There is, fortunately, a very accurate engraving from this picture, which, though not an identical portrait, like that of Kemble in Cato, is yet by far the grandest effort of the British School.

It is exceedingly to be regretted, that Mr. Kemble never sat to Sir Joshua, as he might have done, about the time that great man painted his sister. It would have been infinitely desirable to possess a juvenile portrait of him by Reynolds, to compare with those in advanced life by Sir Thomas Lawrence. A satisfaction that we fully enjoy, for instance, as to Mr. Windham.

Although I thus constantly bring the brother and sister

together, I by no means think, that the performances of Mr. Kemble were, at the time of which I am treating, equal in effect to those of Mrs. Siddons. Their talents, although they bore a strong family resemblance, differed considerably as to their power, and, in some respects, character. The organ of the brother was weaker than his sister's; he was, besides, very far indeed from his meridian. His studies were ardent, and embraced every thing collateral to his art. No man applied more than Mr. Kemble, at the same time that his habits were highly convivial. The mornings he devoted to business, the evenings, not seldom, to his friends. He wrote out his parts accurately from the authentic copies; he possessed himself, by degress, of every critical work upon the drama. He was intimate, according to their different habits, with Mr. Steevens, Mr. Malone, and Mr. Reed, the editors and commentators of Shakspeare. On the vast ground of that poet, Mr. Kemble, like them, made his stand; and it was fortunate that he did so. Fame was sure to be acquired by contributing any way to that of Shakspeare. The singleness of our object contributes to its attainment. He saw that much was yet to be done in the representations of his plays, and determined, when he should acquire the necessary power, to bend every nerve to make them perfect, beyond all previous example. To do this, he was first himself to study the antiquities of his own and other countries; to be acquainted with their architecture, their dress, their weapons, their manners; and he, by degrees, assembled about him the artists who could best carry his designs into effect. To be critically exact was the great ambition of his life; and that his future edifice might be lasting, he laid the foundations of it in TRUTH.

I love to show the extent and accuracy of his studies, to prove to the young student the absolute necessity for equal pains on his part. For who ever derived from nature more powerful gifts than Mr. Kemble? He had the finest head, perhaps, that has ever been seen; a noble and admirably constructed figure; an articulation that was unequalled; fine taste, and a bold and poetic conception of character; and yet what was his lot in this his *adored* profession? LABOUR—incessant, interminable labour.

Among the novelties of the season I am to mention, as successful beyond the usual measure, Mr. Macnally's opera of Robin Hood. It had been a theme of great complacency in this country, that, although nearly all things were corrupted among us, the administration of justice, like the private virtues of the sovereign, was exemplary and unquestioned. Macnally, of the profession himself, assumed the ungrateful

distinction of attacking the justice of the country; and he found the spirit of the times in perfect unison with his own. The tale of Robin Hood became, under his management, a rather pleasing *pasticcio*, enforced with Goldsmith's Edwin and Angelina, and other excrescences. Shield supplied seventeen new airs in this opera, and adapted twelve old ones. This delightful composer was not originally bred to music; and was seemingly, at one time, much more likely to have improved our naval architecture, than our operas; but what can withstand the favourite bent of genius? He is still among us: and as happy as good temper, good health, and an excellent heart can make him; gratified too with the continued popularity of much of his music.

But our musical records would be indeed imperfect, did we silently pass over the most important festival, that the talents of the country were ever called upon to celebrate. The reader sees that I allude to the famous Commemoration of Handel, in the Abbey Church of Westminster.

It originated in a conversation, in the year 1783, between Earl Fitzwilliam, Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, and Joah Bates, Esq. at the house of the latter. The object first pointed to an enjoyment collectively of all the first rate vocal and instrumental talents; and it was shaped towards Handel by the reflection, that a complete century had now passed since his birth, and a quarter of one since the death of that great man. It was first submitted to the consideration of the Directors of the Concert of Ancient Music—they readily undertook to conduct it. The design at length was mentioned to the late king, who was little short of an idolater as to the music of Handel. The plan, therefore, soon ripened under the royal patronage; and Wyatt undertook the accommodations for the visitors. The Bishop of Rochester made but one condition—that the Westminster Infirmary should be benefitted by the celebration. The profits of the first day, it was therefore agreed, should be equally divided between the Infirmary and the Musical Fund. The other days belonged exclusively to the Fund.

The performances in the Abbey were by daylight, those of the Pantheon in the evening. Mr. Wyatt's arrangements were judicious and beautiful. He raised a vast orchestra with its back to the great western door, beginning at an altitude of seven feet from the pavement. There he erected his organ, and commodiously placed the whole of his performers, in number exceeding 500. The great aisle under the orchestra, and the side galleries, were so contrived, by the gradual elevation, that from every point the whole was seen,

and the royal box terminated the prospect; it had its back, in course, to the quire.

As more than 4000 persons were provided with seats, there was no apprehension of danger, or even difficulty; and on Wednesday, the 26th of May, the first celebration was held. As the company prudently began to arrive early, by ten o'clock the assemblage was numerous, and by half after eleven the whole immense space was peopled, chiefly with ladies, in every tasteful variety of morning dresses, presenting a spectacle of the most graceful beauty, from which all cumbrous magnificence was banished.

About a quarter after twelve o'clock, their majesties and their family arrived. The king first entered the royal box, and very perceptibly started with surprise at the noble scene before him. He stood a few seconds suspended in astonishment. The queen expressed an almost rapturous delight. Of the royal family, in the box with their majesties, were Prince Edward, the Princess Royal, and the Princesses Augusta, Sophia, and Elizabeth.

As soon as the royal party were seated, they were saluted with the coronation anthem, and the entertainments of the day, divided into three parts, proceeded to their close. Since the roofing in of that sublime fabric, such a burst of harmony had never pealed through its aisle, as arose at the awful first motion of the leader's arm. Many were fainting, and numbers, of both sexes, relieved themselves by tears. It would be idle, at this distance of time, to reprint a mere catalogue of names; but I will, as a scale for future enjoyments of such a nature, record the numbers of each instrument, also of the singers, and the qualities of the voices.

First Violins	50	Violoncelloes	30
Second ditto	52	Bassoons	25
Tenors	32	Double Bassoon	1
Oboes	26	Double Basses	18
Trumpets	14	Drums	4
Trombones	3	Double Drum	1
Horns	12		

VOCAL PERFORMERS.

Cantos	58	Basses	70
Altos	51		
Tenors	66	Total of the Band	513

On Thursday the Pantheon took its turn to honour the powers of the great composer; and very early in the afternoon, the crowd at the doors was extreme. This was, in course, upon a smaller scale, and there might be 2500 per-

sons assembled. Mr. Wyatt, who erected the Pantheon, took care that the temporary structure should harmonise with the building. To give some idea of the brilliancy, 7000 lamps glittered from the dome. The selection, to accord with the place, was of a sprightly character; solemnity was reserved for the mysterious architecture of the Abbey, where on Friday they rehearsed the Messiah, and 800 *half*-guineas were obtained for the charity: and the original design was completed on Saturday the 29th of May. I snatch from innumerable excellences, the air by Madam Mara, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and can only express my perfect conviction, that nothing human ever, before or since,

"Breath'd such divine enchanting ravishment."

There seemed to me a necessity to take this brief notice of an entertainment, which, though not dramatic, I find, was thought somewhat *theatrical*. I shall give the result as to the receipts upon the whole, and the appropriation of the money.

	£.	s.	d.
Received the first day at Westminster Abbey, Wednesday, May 26, 1784	2966	5	0
Ditto, second performance in the Pantheon, Thursday, May 27	1690	10	0
Ditto, third performance in the Abbey, Saturday, May 29	2626	1	0
Ditto, fourth performance, Thursday, June 3	1603	7	0
Ditto, fifth performance, Saturday, June 5	2117	17	0
Ditto, at three several rehearsals in the Abbey and Pantheon	944	17	10
Ditto, his majesty's most gracious donation	525	0	0
Ditto, by sale of printed books of the words	262	15	0
Whole receipts	£12,736	12	10

Disbursements.

	£.	s.	d.
Paid Mr. Wyatt for building in the Abbey and Pantheon	1969	12	0
Ditto Ashley, for paying the band, &c.	1976	17	0
Ditto rent and illumination of the Pantheon	156	16	0
Ditto advertising in town and country papers	236	19	0
Ditto printing books of the words*	289	2	0
Ditto door-keepers	102	1	6
Ditto use of organ	100	0	0
Ditto high and petty constables	100	5	0
Ditto gratifications	167	5	0
Ditto engraving cheques and tickets; medals, drawings, guards, porters, and sundry incidents	351	8	10
Ditto to the Society for decayed musicians	6000	0	0
Ditto to the Westminster Hospital	1000	0	0
Balance in the treasurer's hands for subsequent demands	286	6	6
	£12,736	12	10

* They did not sell them to this amount, it appears.

It will not be suspected that I view this commemoration with the feeling which led the poet Cowper to regard it as profane—the audience did *not* listen to "Messiah's eulogy for Handel's sake."* The result of the meeting was CHARITY, by which the most sacred spot cannot be sullied. Had there been any thing involving the interests of religion, the KING himself would have been the first man to point it out. Let it be remembered, too, that the very genius of the building seemed to have dictated the selection of the music; and that the sensations of the audience were of the purest and sublimest kind of which our natures are susceptible.

To return to decided theatricals. Mrs. Siddons closed her second season on the 13th of May, with the performance of Belvidera. She had been a little more prudent in her exertions the present season, having only acted fifty-three times. As I did the first season, I shall on this, record the number of repetitions of each character, To show how a first impression keeps its ground, Isabella equalled in attraction the Gamester, though there she had the aid of Mr. Kemble.

Isabella	7 times.
Shore	3 ditto.
Euphrasia	4 ditto.
Belvidera	6 ditto.
Calista	1 ditto.
Zara	2 ditto.
Isabella (Measure for Measure)	5 ditto.
Mrs. Beverly	7 ditto.
Constance	4 ditto.
Lady Randolph	6 ditto.
Countess Salisbury	3 ditto.
Sigismunda	5 ditto.
	53 times.

The Covent Garden manager had very earnestly tried his strength in tragedy against the other theatre; but it was impracticable. The fashion followed in the train of Mrs. Siddons, with a perseverance that robbed it of its most appropriate epithet, fickleness. Mr. Harris, therefore, suffered "the courtiers to bear away the honours of the tournament," and allowed Mrs. Abington, the muse of comedy, to close his sea-

* *Sake*, a word which Junius defines by the Latin CAUSA. The *cause* of the meeting was to enjoy divine harmonies in their highest perfection;—their *effects* must have been HOLY.

son on the 2d of June, with a few lines written by herself, and which in course therefore avoided every allusion to the sister muse. They are unaffected, and to the purpose, and the reader will excuse my wish to preserve even the temporary effusions of the great comic actress.

"The play concluded, and this season o'er,
When we shall view these friendly rows no more,
In my own character let me appear,
To pay my warmest, humblest, homage here.
Yet how shall words, those shadowy signs, reveal
The real obligations which I feel?
Here they are fix'd, and hence they ne'er shall part,
'While memory holds her seat' within my heart!
This for myself. Our friends and chief behind,
Who bear your favors with a grateful mind,
Have likewise bade me, as their proxy, own
Your kind indulgence to their efforts shown:
Efforts, which, warm'd by such a fostering choice,
Again shall doubly court the public voice:
Till when, with duteous thanks, take our adieu!
'Tis meant to ALL, to you, and you, and you.*
Hoping to find you here, in the same places,
With the same health, good spirits, and kind faces."

And even this from the gayest and most elegant of women, had an effect beyond the usual measure of such achievements, and shut up the theatre in the happiest mode imaginable.

At the close of the season, it may be proper to notice a very remarkable event which occurred during its progress. On the 20th of February, 1784, in the court of King's Bench, Lord Mansfield decided in the action Macklin *versus* Colman, damages laid at 1000*l.* His lordship, having accepted the reference, gave to the plaintiff 500*l.* each party paying their own costs.

The origin and progress of this affair are highly important in a theatrical view, as they tend to ascertain the legal rights of that critical personage called the town. On the 18th of November, 1773, certain tailors conceiving that Macbeth, as performed by Mr. Macklin, was rather a tragedy for *warm* weather, resolved that he should not be permitted to act the part: they therefore assembled from all the resorts of these "kings of shreds and patches," the Sun, and the Dog, and the Magpie, and the Phœnix, and denounced their vengeance against the veteran, in accents so fierce, that, though Macbeth had been changed to Shylock, nothing but his discharge from the theatre would induce them to spare the chan-

* Pit, Boxes, and Gallery.

deliers and the benches. The elder Colman was himself compelled to make his first appearance on a *public* stage, and considering these wretches as his masters, yielded to their pleasure, and pronounced the gratifying words, "he is discharged."

Mr. Macklin first legally established against the leaders of these "forcible feebles" a charge of conspiracy; and Lord Mansfield in the kindest manner pressed his opinion that the compensation to be made by the parties to Mr. Macklin should be left to the master. Macklin himself, however, proposed a very moderate reimbursement for his losses, from which debt of justice, one of the conspirators, by name *only* William AUGUSTUS Miles, did himself the honour to abscond. In fact, Macklin had so narrowed his own satisfaction, that he found himself absolutely out of pocket in respect of his costs on the information.

For two seasons the managers had persisted in their acquiescence, and he had therefore a right to the salary and the benefits, which so weak a conduct on their part had deprived him of. But here there was a slight difficulty, and that was, to establish whether Macklin was *engaged* at the theatre or not? A bill of discovery was therefore filed in Chancery; and this dramatic piece, upon the Horatian precept, *Nonum prematur in annum*, had been before the *great* theatrical manager, the Lord Chancellor of England, for nearly nine years. This to a man, at that time certainly NINETY, was a grievance, which he was advised to terminate. The late Lord Kenyon was the barrister, who on the 6th of June 1781, gave it as his opinion, that the equity cause should be abandoned, and that he should try his fortune at law. This sound advice was ultimately attended with the success already stated. As soon as Macklin obtained the award, he made his opponent, the manager, a present of it. He interpreted rather like Portia than Shylock.

"This bond doth give me here no jot of BLOOD."

But the highly momentous parts of these proceedings are the two clear and satisfactory positions laid down by Lord Mansfield; one as to the rights of the audience, the other as to those of the actor. For the first, he thus expresses himself.—"Every man that is at the play house, has a right to express his approbation or disapprobation INSTANTANEOUSLY, according as he likes either the acting or piece. There is a right due to the theatre—an unalterable right—they MUST HAVE THAT."

For the second, thus he secures the actor or author.--"It is not necessary to prove a parole, or written agreement, in order to make a conspiracy : if persons concur in acts to do the same thing, upon any bad or improper principles, it is conspiracy."

But the application of these *dicta* cannot be further extended, until a late period of these memoirs.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Kemble's acting.—Its peculiar character.—The great and beautiful in art.—Vulgar nature.—Macbeth.—Academic style.—Melody.—Familiar touches in diction.—Sir Joshua Reynolds quoted in support of the Author's opinions.—Colman's Season, 1784.—*Two to One.—Mrs. Inchbald.—Holcroft's Noble Peasant.—Hayley's Lord Russel.—Miss Kemble.—George Steevens.—Anecdote of Palmer in this play.—Mr. Steevens's furious prejudice against Mrs. Siddons.—Hayley's want of delicacy and inconsistency exposed.—Rhyming Comedies.—Peeping Tom.—George Alexander Stevens.—Mr. Kemble in the recess goes to Liverpool and Manchester.—Mrs. Siddons at Edinburgh.—Dublin.—Cork.—Her illness.—Systematic attacks upon her.—Younger and Mrs. Mattocks.—Their triumph in Lear over Henderson and Mrs. Siddons.—Travesty of the Beggar's Opera.*

Having conducted Mr. Kemble to the close of his first season in town, it may be proper to consider now the peculiar style of his acting—by which I mean, in course, the idea he had formed to himself of the art, and the power with which it was to be executed. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his seventh discourse upon painting, has the following most beautiful passage; by which we see the opinion of Mr. Burke verified as to that great artist: "To be such a painter, he was a profound and penetrating philosopher." To have altered the arrangement of it would have better suited my immediate object, but I would not take even a slight liberty with the composition of so great a writer.

"Perhaps no apology ought to be received for offences committed against the vehicle (whether it be the organ of seeing, or of hearing), by which our pleasures are conveyed to the mind. We must take care that the eye be not perplexed and distracted by a confusion of equal parts, or equal lights, or offended by an unharmonious mixture of colours, as we should guard against offending the ear by unharmonious sounds. We may venture to be more confident of the truth of this observation, since we find that Shakspeare, on a parallel occasion, has made Hamlet recommend to the players a precept

of the same kind,—never to offend the ear by harsh sounds: *In the very torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of your passion*, says he, *you must acquire and beget a temperance, that may give it smoothness.* And, yet, at the same time, he very justly observes, *The end of playing, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature.* No one can deny, that violent passions will naturally emit harsh and disagreeable tones: yet this great poet and critic thought that this imitation of nature would cost too much, if purchased at the expense of disagreeable sensations, or, as he expresses it, of *splitting the ear.* The poet and ACTOR, as well as the painter of genius, who is well acquainted with all the variety and sources of pleasure in the mind and imagination, has little regard or attention to common nature, or creeping after common sense. By overleaping those narrow bounds, he more effectually seizes the whole mind, and more powerfully accomplishes his purpose. This success is ignorantly imagined to proceed from inattention to all rules, and a defiance of reason and judgment; whereas it is in truth acting according to the best rules and the justest reason.

"He who thinks nature, in the narrow sense of the word, is alone to be followed, will produce but a scanty entertainment for the imagination: every thing is to be done with which it is natural for the mind to be pleased, whether it proceeds from simplicity or variety, uniformity or regularity; whether the scenes are familiar or exotic: rude and wild, or enriched and cultivated: for it is natural for the mind to be pleased with all these in their turn. In short, whatever pleases has in it what is analogous to the mind, and is, therefore, in the highest and best sense of the word, natural."—*Works*, vol. i. p. 209. ed. 1798.

In this passage may be developed the principles of every thing that is great and beautiful in art, and consequently whatever is poetical in the conception of character. The actor who looks no farther than common nature for the expression of the passions, will be short of the true mark; for though we are as men all liable to the same influences, they are greatly modified by our personal qualities and individual habits. To instance in the character of Macbeth. An actor of no great elevation of mind, but of strong imagination, may throw out in his whole manner so speaking a terror, that he shall certainly be the true and perfect image of one who had committed a murder: but he may still leave a question to the spectator, whether that murderer be *Macbeth*, or not? Does the actor, for instance, exhibit to us a noble nature absolutely sunk and depraved by that act, or a base

one losing its very cunning in the fear of detection? Is he a hero, who descends to become an assassin, or a common stabber, who rises to become a royal murderer?

The direction in these cases is uniform. Look at the poet; you will see with what properties he invests his character; embody them, and you will be its just and natural representative. To be sure: there can be no doubt of it. The difficulty is to hold steadily the conception thus formed, and to express all the characteristics of which it is composed. It is unnecessary to go minutely into the character of Macbeth; it has been analysed with great skill by Mr. Kemble himself, by Mr. Whateley, Professor Richardson, and others. The moral progression of the part must be the constant inspirer of the actor; above all, he must keep before him the influence of those *spirits who know all mortal consequences;* without this mental discipline to regulate the whole, the mere external demonstrations will often appear forced, disjointed, and unnatural; a regard to this principle removes all seeming inconsistency, and combines the whole into one great and consistent character.

The difficulties of such a task may well astonish our minds, and it may be reasonably enough asked, whether all this is done by an actor on the stage? The answer is ready; such must be the process: in all efforts approaching to perfection, this is done. There is a mode of passing through a character, with no more effort, than will satisfy a common knowledge of it. If the actor seem to be in earnest, is sufficiently noisy, declaim in the received tune, or has some strange one of his own—if he practise all the tricks of his profession—if his body be disposed in suitable attitudes, his features wrung into what he calls expression, and he look successfully, there will be usually little doubt of its being a very fine performance; so no doubt it is, of what every body alike has done upon the common stages of England for a hundred years together. Is *this* NATURE well understood? is *this* ART in its perfection? Neither; it is a drilled exercise, which a *boy* has been made to do, who never comprehended the reason for any one thing that he did.

It may now be seen, that, where characters are finely made out by the poet, where qualities of the same mind oppose each other, where the passions themselves have a thousand shades admitting of palpable discrimination, it is no light study that HE takes up, who would indeed become an actor. The short or royal road here is—"Ask your own heart, how you would feel in a similar situation." Again we say, right; nothing can be better. But WHAT IS that situation? How is it to be

known but by accurate study? How is it to be expressed but by the most entire assimilation of the actor to the part? The qualities must be seemingly alike, or pass for similar: all the delicacies of character must be conceived, or they cannot be expressed: without much refinement in the actor, they will not even be suspected. He should therefore be a man, mentally and personally, highly accomplished.

What I have above endeavoured to point out may be termed the academic or critical style of acting: it is built on a metaphysical search into our nature, and a close attention to all the minutiæ of language. It deals, therefore, in *pauses*, which were not before made: for the unlearned actor cared little about the transitions of thought. He never examined, of the associations of our ideas, how much in dramatic dialogue is suppressed—and never dreamt that the rapid junction of ideas totally unconnected is violent and unmeaning. It lays a peculiar *stress* upon words, which before received no emphasis; because it analyses every thing by which meaning is conveyed, and can leave nothing to chance, which ought to be settled by reason. In short, what philosophical criticism had discovered to be properties of Shakspeare's characters, the actor now endeavoured to show. To be a just representative of the part, he was to become a living commentary on the poet.

It will be said,—it has been said, all this is but the vanity of the art; a mixed and popular assembly desires none of it: they are better satisfied with a representation less refined. The answer to this is obvious. I say then, if ANY PART of such mixed assembly require this excellence, it should be had; at first for *their* enjoyment, at length for that of "*lower messes*," who, though originally "*purblind to the business*," will soon from imitation, and at last from judgment, prefer this refinement in their amusements, to the gross and vulgar style formerly endured.

But if such attention be paid to the exhibition of character, there is also to be noticed an inferior branch of the actor's art, addressed exclusively to the ear. The verse, that has been modulated with the happiest skill, claims to be uttered in a cadence of corresponding melody: the language of poetry is by no means common speech,—nor is it to be lowered by a rugged and colloquial familiarity. The great poet knows his meaning perfectly, and always shows it to his intelligent reader. He gives, occasionally, passages of high declamatory music, which must be sustained by the actor's organ. He, at intervals, throws in brief touches of feeling, in the language of daily life; and the simpler the expressions are,

the more brilliant are the effects they produce. Write the whole play in such a diction, and it would be a creeping, prosaic, vulgar performance. One of these familiar touches (the reader will supply hundreds) occurs to me in Macbeth; after the spirit of Banquo has vanished, the trembling usurper faulters out to his reproaching queen—

"If I stand here, I saw him."

The reader, who remembers the tone and gesture which from Mr. Kemble conveyed this assertion to the audience, will know how truly he could hit the merely natural, when no other considerations called upon him for a more elevated style of utterance. The learned and perfect actor will at all times be the genuine representative of the poet in the character. He will never debase his conceptions, nor deprave his language. The flights of fancy will seem to spring from *his* imagination; the verse will flow from organs accustomed to be delighted with its music.

As the modern taste in acting differs so considerably from mine, I hope to be excused tor strengthening myself with one more passage from Sir Joshua Reynolds:—

"I must observe, (says that judicious critic in his thirteenth discourse,) that even the expression of violent passion, is not always the most excellent in proportion as it is the most natural: so great terror and such disagreeable sensations may be communicated to the audience, that the balance may be destroyed by which pleasure is preserved, and holds its predominancy in the mind; violent distortion of action, harsh screamings of the voice, however great the occasion, or however natural on such occasion, are, therefore, not admissible in the theatric art. Many of these allowed deviations from nature arise from the necessity which there is, that every thing should be raised and enlarged beyond its natural state; that the full effect may come home to the spectator, which otherwise would be lost in the comparatively extensive space of the theatre. Hence the deliberate and stately step, the studied grace of action, which seems to enlarge the dimensions of the actor, and alone to fill the stage. All this unnaturalness, though right and proper in its place, would appear affected and ridiculous in a private room; *quid enim deformius, quàm scenam in vitam transferre?*"

Such, I know, were the conceptions which Mr. Kemble entertained of his art; and on these principles labouring incessantly through life, he became, at length, the most scientific artist that perhaps ever graced the stage. But a great

deal was to be done, to satisfy desires so extensive; he pleased others at a cheaper rate than would gratify himself; and he frequently expressed his dissatisfaction at an imperfect performance, by a very homely phrase—"I acted to-night THIRTY SHILLINGS a week."

My attention is now called away to a scene of lighter amusement. Mr. Colman's theatre in the Haymarket, which opened its summer season on the 2d of June, with a new prelude, temporary in its subject, and political in its application. The great Westminster election was here that of two managers of the winter theatres, and the stage had its female influence as well as the hustings. Mrs. Buckram and Mrs. Simper, to be sure, were not restricted to the polite language of Mrs. Hobart, and the enchanting Duchess of Devonshire, whose condescensions were certainly *courteous*, and the author was frequently reminded of the danger of such a subject. The election of the managers was not Mr. Colman's best prelude. The audience waited for that till the 19th, when the first dramatic offering of his son was brought out—a musical comedy in three acts, called Two to One. The young author was then in his twenty-first year, full of whim, new to the stage, but born to be its ornament. I recollect nothing of the plot; indeed he never encumbered himself with much intricacy of this sort; but he was from the first, the same sprightly, peculiar writer, that he remains at SIXTY. His father contributed a prologue to his production, which *did* not avoid either the parent bird, or our special old friend, Dædalus. But he bore his young eaglet to the sun, and left him, with a *joke*, to try his proper pinions.

> "With dulness should the sire and son be curst,
> And dunce the second follow dunce the first,
> The shallow stripling's vain attempt you'll mock,
> And damn him—for a CHIP of the *old* BLOCK."

The summer of 1784, was highly productive. That elegant writer, and very beautiful actress, Mrs. Inchbald, was fortunate enough to send a farce to Mr. Colman, on the subject of the balloon, then travelling, in the imagination, to distant regions, and astonishing the natives of another continent, with the descending absurdities of Europe. The inhabitants of Wapping enter the dangerous precincts of the Mogul's seraglio, and claim the privilege of spies, as usual, under the character of ambassadors. The farce has always

been attended with abundant laughter, and upon its success, the author ventured to remind the little manager, that her *Mogul* had an elder sister, who had for three years in vain solicited his attention. He found her now perfectly accomplished, and she came out the following year, under the title "I'll tell you what."

On the 12th of July, Miss Woollery appeared, the first time on any stage, in the character of Sigismunda. She was a very beautiful woman, but her powers were not of the highest class. She, however, was fashionably supported, and therefore, on this small stage, was permitted to perform the heroines for a time. Miss Kemble, too, was exceedingly admired in the interesting part of Harriet, in the Guardian.

Novelty was literally the order of the day in the Haymarket house: on the 2d of August, Mr. Holcroft brought out his opera of the Noble Peasant, an attempt to write of the times of Robin Hood, in the style of our ancient authors; a work extremely difficult to perform, and usually full of anachronisms, both as to thought and expression. Although it may be perfectly true, that the style of dramatic composition in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, as well as the genius of that era, far transcends any subsequent effort, yet I cannot see the slightest utility in a modern author's trying to become an ancient. We wear the habit ungracefully that we do not usually wear. If we think for ourselves, such thoughts will not easily take the dress of ancient diction. If we allow our masters both to think and speak for us, the work is contemptible, because it is not OURS, and cannot be THEIRS. We never so thoroughly understand ancient manners, as to become the speaker of our language in any past age; when it is best done, how very meagre is the wit; and how the scenes of our old comedies are plundered, to present even a sprinkle of every-day phraseology, in which, to give a resemblance, the *exclamations* of our ancestors are forced so upon the ear, that they seem to form the staple commodity of human intercourse.

Mr. Holcroft struggled, too, with the dwarf and the fool, and the archery of former times; he found it was no slight task he had assumed, and stated his difficulties plainly. I cannot remember now much of his language, but his music was well adapted and composed by Shield, and the piece rather added to his dramatic reputation.

On the 18th of the month, the tragedy of Lord Russel, by Mr. Hayley, was also represented at this theatre. He had written this, and one other tragedy, Marcella, for a private

theatre, and it remained to be tried how compositions, so very sober and regular, would gratify the taste of a public auditory. I believe it answered the most sanguine expectations. The characters interested by their virtue; but the muse of Hayley was not, I think, vigorous enough for tragedy; his verses were too uniform in their structure, and his diction rather feeble and flat. Here is one of his purest passages.

> "*Russel.* Thou dear angelic spirit! tis from thee
> That I have learnt the truest fortitude;
> A courage built upon a heavenly basis.—
> O gracious being! who has guided us
> Through fourteen years of pure domestic bliss,
> The best and rarest of thy gifts to man,
> Accept, as tribute for thy blessings past,
> Our meek submission in this trying hour!"

There is nothing of poetry here but the metrical arrangement of the words.

Miss Woollery acted his Countess, and Miss Kemble the Lady Margaret. The latter very amiable actress was extremely diffident, and needed every encouragement to enable her to develop the talents which she really possessed. She had one very powerful friend indeed, the late George Steevens, Esq. the commentator upon Shakspeare. I have good reason for saying, that he led the family to imagine there was something serious in the attentions which he was paying this young and beautiful actress; but it ended with the usual discreet assurances of zealous friendship and unbounded admiration. On this occasion, his efforts to aid Miss Kemble betrayed him into an indiscretion, which I find thus recorded in the Memoirs of the poet Hayley, vol. i. p. 323.

It happened that Steevens, who was described by Dr. Johnson, as not malignant, but only "uniformly mischievous," for something, or for nothing, now amused himself by assailing Mrs. Siddons, and hoped to mortify her by magnifying the theatrical talents of her sister, to whom he paid incessant attention. This induced him to write the following letter to Hayley:—

"Hampstead Heath, July 27, 1784.

"My dear Sir,

"You have it in your power at once to confer a great favour on me, and do eminent service to a good and lovely girl. Your 'Lord Russel,' appears in the course of next week, at the Haymarket. Miss Kemble, who has succeeded beyond the expectations of her warmest friends, in the very delicate part of Harriet, in The Guardian, is to personate

your Lady Margaret; and I will venture to promise, she shall execute all you could desire within the compass of so small a character. If her natural timidity could once be overcome, she would make a distinguished figure in her profession, as her mind is every way stronger and more cultivated than her sister's. Her diffidence in herself is her chief enemy; and I know not how it can be dislodged, but by praise, when she has deserved it. If, therefore, you, whose approbation is fame, would bestow a dozen lines on her performance of Margaret, you will be guilty only of an honest stratagem, to procure her that confidence in her own abilities, which I am certain will operate to her future advantage. You know what you should hope to find in the representative of Old Bedford's daughter, and no one can describe it half so well. If you will oblige me with a few verses, which I may send to her in your name and in your handwriting, the day after she has trod in your buskins, you will, as I observed before, prove the best friend she ever met with. You are one of the few people whom one can venture to solicit in the cause of an *honest woman.** You have my assurance, that your lines shall not be printed without your immediate permission. I shall persuade her you came up incog. to see your own play, returned into the country next morning, and not knowing her address, intrusted me with the delivery of your compliment. I shall attend every representation of your play, and will transmit you a faithful account of its success, which I do not doubt of. Your Lady Russel, though patronised by a number of clamorous friends, will prove only a piece of beautiful imbecility. I saw her Sigismunda twice; her voice is hardly audible, and her face, though handsome, exhibits no variety of expression.

"If I can prevail on you to oblige me, let me beg you will write the lines on a separate sheet of paper, and enclose them in your letter. I shall pay with cheerfulness for a packet of a pound weight, on such an occasion.

"With my best compliments to the fair Eliza, whom I entreat to back my petition,

"I remain,

"Your ever faithful and affectionate,

"G. STEEVENS.

* Tasty language this for Steevens; yet he knew to whom he was writing, and "*something* he must mean." Observe the *ease* he conveys to an apprehensive author, by assuring him, that his heroine would prove a "piece of *beautiful imbecility*."

"P. S. On second thoughts, if you will allow the verses to go into the St. James's Chronicle, after they have been presented to the lady, you will do her cause more extensive service. But, without your leave, they shall be circulated only among her friends, in manuscript. I am sure she will be more flattered by your notice, than by any present that could be made her.

"I hear you have repurchased all your works from Dodsley: a circumstance I much rejoice in. Is it true? If it is, we may expect, I hope, a handsome edition. Pray let me know how the 'Lord Russel' went off at Chichester. I fear the Collins's did little justice to it. I have discharged Hernandez* with better success than I expected; and most heartily wish our Marcella was to be your Rachael. I never heard a line so forcibly spoken as she spoke one of yours:

"'And all the blazing ruin rushes on thee.'

"Adieu.

"My best wishes to nurse; she will see I have not forgotten an old friend, though I am soliciting for a new one."

Whether the writer of this very singular letter intended only to gratify the young actress he patronised, or had an insidious design of drawing the dramatic author into a situation that might render him ridiculous, Hayley could never perfectly ascertain: but several hints which he had lately received of the critic's envious disposition, induced him to consider the strange request as a snare, which it became him to elude with civility and good humour. He therefore returned the following reply, and Steevens wrote to him no more.

"Eartham, July, 1784.

"My dear Sir,

"I can hardly believe you serious in your request. If you are so, your diffidence in yourself is certainly equal to that of the lady you patronise; and you must allow me to correct it. Can you really, with a grave countenance, desire me to praise an actress, of whose merit I cannot probably be a spectator, when you yourself have not only the advantage of studying all her excellence, but the highest power of describ-

* Hernandez is the *villain* in Mr. Hayley's tragedy of Marcella; Steevens acted the character it seems in private. Iago is a saint to Hernandez. Dr. Young wrote one act on the subject of this tragedy. The *declamation* of Steevens was beautiful indeed.

ing it in poetry, animated by personal regard? My friend Romney might as well write to a Venetian painter*, and request from him an ideal portrait of a lady in London, who is only within the reach of his own excellent pencil.

"As I am convinced that the talents of Miss Kemble must have received infinite improvement from your critical instructions, I am willing to do her the justice of believing, that no poetical praise could animate her so highly as that which flows from your pen. Were she not contented with this, she could but ill deserve the panegyric of any other encomiast.

"So much for the lady! whom I will hope to thank in person hereafter, for the graces that, I doubt not, she will give to the short character in my tragedy which she condescends to represent.

"As to myself, I might at present very fairly plead an utter inability to compose such a compliment as you desire; for I happen to be surrounded with carpenters, whose hammers stun me from five in the morning till eight at night, being eagerly engaged in fitting up a new library. I might also remind you that my compliance with your request, were it possible, might throw me into a condition truly ridiculous; as you will allow, if you recollect the following squib, composed by a nameless wag, upon a luckless dramatic author of the last age:

> "Chance, who loves with barbs to quarrel,
> And to a nettle turn their laurel,
> Contrived to spoil this bard's design,
> For ere his heroine spoke a line,
> Though with his friends the house was crammed,
> His play unluckily was damned!"

"I am sorry to hear you speak of the new actress in terms so unpromising; but I have the comfort of knowing, that the gentleness of Lady Russel does not demand any vehement animation. As the play and the principal actress are both of so quiet a character, I ought, perhaps, to wish you a good nap through the two last acts of the performance. I shall, however, be obliged to you for the account you kindly offer to send me; and I trust I am philosopher enough to support with composure any fate that may befall the production.

* One of the happiest illustrations imaginable. Whenever Mr. Hayley in prose composition, kept away from the *florid* and the *fulsome*, he wrote with power, purity, and elegance. As an instance, take the life of Milton, for G. Nicol.

"Adieu! let me exhort you to set a juster value on your own poetical talents, and believe me

"Very faithfully yours,

"W. Hayley.

"P. S. Eliza is escaped to Chichester, from the noise, dust, and confusion of our little castle, which is an absolute chaos at present, as both the old library and the new one, are in the hands of workmen. Nurse, who is a Hebe of threescore, returns your kind salutation. Adieu.

"To George Steevens, Esq. Hampstead."

The late Mr. Hayley seems to have written more *sensitively* than any author of his time. Among a thousand declarations of his delicacy, there is one which caught my eye as to the SACRED nature of epistolary communications. It would be difficult, I imagine, in this view, to account for his publication of Steevens's indiscreet letter. The commentator had neither been asked, nor had he given his consent to the publication of it. Steevens, to be sure, was no more, and, therefore, it might be done without challenging any of his dexterous and powerful resentment; but there was a decision in it not likely to be agreeable to *one* person still living; and it was besides assumed, on no authority at all, that he had conceived a *furious prejudice* against Mrs. Siddons. Surely not against her powers as an actress. There were notions entertained at this time, that an extreme frugality obtained in her domestic arrangements; and Steevens himself was remarkable for ostentation without hospitality. Every body heard of his plate, and the ceremony with which his table was served; but his meals were mostly solitary; as his evenings were devoted to his literary labours. I have read one of his *jeux d'esprits* upon the subject alluded to, malicious enough to be sure; but I never heard from him, or of him, any thing to the disparagement of the *genius* of the great actress. The *most* positive success of Miss Kemble would not have *mortified* Mrs. Siddons. Why were the two sisters in town, or how came they to be engaged at the same theatre, but by the affectionate solicitude, and earnest request of their transcendant relation? Alas! they might both of them have made immense advances in the art, and never then have approached the point of any reasonable competition. I myself saw all that they did upon the stages of London, and could not but know the current opinion of their merits. But leaving Mr. Hayley's notion as to Steevens's *furious prejudice*, to be established or not, by the story he tells, it is but justice to let the able commentator speak for himself, of Mrs. Siddons; and he evidently here meant to

give *immortality* to his opinion, by affixing it to the page of Shakspeare. In the year 1793, he published an edition of the poet, the last seen through the press by himself. In the advertisement he thus alludes to her. He is speaking of Mrs. Crawford's alteration of the concluding speech of Lady Randolph, in Douglas, from the obscure intimation "make a woman bold," to

"Such a son,
"And such a husband, *drive me to my fate.*"

"Here we perceive," says Mr. Steevens, "that fate, the old post-horse of tragedy, has been saddled to expedite intelligence, which was meant to be delayed till the necessary moment of its disclosure. Nay, further, the prompter's book being thus corrupted, on the first night of the revival of this beautiful and interesting play at Drury Lane, the same spurious nonsense was heard from the lids of Mrs. SIDDONS; lips, whose MATCHLESS POWERS should be sacred only to the task of animating the purest strains of dramatic poetry."

This was doing, as Smollet had done with respect to Garrick, at all events making atonement in a work of *fact*, for the injury done in one of *fiction*. For I think there can be no doubt that the letter to Hayley was an attempt to render him supremely ridiculous: but it was too gross for even the false appetite of Hayley's literary intercourse to swallow, as the reader has seen by his reply. Disappointed of his prey, Steevens at once threw off the mask, and never sought nor wished any renewal of the acquaintance. But whatever may be thought of Steevens, his friend at Eartham, perhaps unconsciously, rivalled him at last in wantonness of mischief. Let it be remembered that Hayley celebrates, with inimitable inconsistency, the VIRTUES as well as TALENTS of Steevens upon his tomb; and then leaves a letter for publication, which tends to show him *faithless* to a friend, *malicious* to acknowledged excellence, and a *treacherous ally* to a young and beautiful actress, whom he affected to consider injured by the undue ascendancy of her own sister. O, the *dear Hermit!*

Upon the subject of this representation of Lord Russel, Palmer's brother, Robert, once told me a ludicrous anecdote, to which I incline to give some credit. It seemed that Palmer had done with Lord Russel as he did with many other characters, that is, totally neglected to study the words of the part; and in this dilemma, he bethought himself of an expedient, which answered astonishingly, and, indeed, by the audience, was never suspected. As much as Lord Russel was unlearned on the night of its performance, he thought

it was better to speak from some character that he did know, than one that he did not; whenever, therefore, he felt himself at a loss, he dexterously introduced some passages from the Earl of Essex, which he contrived to fit into the cues received by Lord Russel; and thus, really giving some parts, and masking others, he gained another day to perfect himself in the character. It will be remembered that to his audience this play was completely new; while the dialogue was in progress, and not seemingly irrelevant, there were no means of detection.

The fate of Lord Russel was extraordinary,—he was murdered even in the representation. Two nights after the above exploit, a tragedy on this subject, by a Dr. Stratford, was, by permission, performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. The characters were principally sustained by Irish gentlemen, who set the author's language to a tune, which gave it a very surprising effect. I believe I could assign the real names to all the characters, but I am unwilling to revive a laugh that ought to die with the occasion. The bill of the day expressed that the parts "were kindly undertaken to be represented by ladies and gentlemen, who never performed on any stage." Their kindness was extreme, for I well remember, that ten years after the fatal 20th of August, there was no mentioning this tragedy before any man who had been present, without his being seized with a convulsive fit of laughter, which, probably, neither Parsons, nor Edwin, nor Liston himself, ever so completely provoked. The doctor issued his tickets from Cecil street;—Mr. Fosbrook let places at the theatre;—the play was repeated four times, and filled a very distinguished place in the conversation of the day.

In my allusion to Mr. Hayley's Lord Russel, I have noticed the singular supplement of Mr. Palmer's ingenuity. The volume of these compositions for a private theatre, together with tragedies that in their composition had nothing remarkable but their being divided into three acts, contained sundry comedies written in rhyme, which was a novelty in our language, that seemed an improvement to the author, Mr. Hayley. It was an easy sparkling versification, partaking in a great degree of the effect of Antsey's New Bath Guide. And although the rhymes were too sensibly felt upon the ear, and the dialogue became consequently a series of epigrams, yet the graceful ease with which this author went through his morrice dance, gave an unexpected pleasure, that only lost its charm by its continuance. If he conceived his notion of the fitness of rhyme, from its use in French comedy, he could

not but know, that every effort is made by both the writer and speaker of that language, to prevent the rhymes from coming hardly upon the ear; that the diversification of alternate masculine and feminine terminations greatly aids such effort; and, indeed, the great charm on their comic stage is the close resemblance of such verse to the common dialogue of life; the care of the verse only imposing upon the poet the impossibility of very facile composition, which renders mere prose too often both trivial and incorrect.

One of these comedies Palmer was allowed to take for his benefit at the summer theatre; and accordingly he brought out the Two Connoisseurs. But he had little calculated upon the difficulty of a performance so strange to the green room. Hardly any of the company could become perfect in so long a series of rhymes; the anxiety to retain or supply them, rendered the whole dialogue tormenting to all parties, and like nothing that could reasonably pass between human creatures. Restrained, too, in the very matter by his manner, the poet seemed to want ideas, or recur too frequently to favourite ones. It is astonishing how often he alludes to the subject of the following quatrain, which closes his first act:

> "Well, ye Gods! if, whenever my nuptial star twinkles,
> I should wed an old hunter of odd periwinkles,
> To engage her nice eye with unchanging attraction,
> May I turn in her arms to a *cold petrifaction.*"

But it was not in the power of Palmer's greatest enemy to have done him so much injury, as by this choice he did himself. The prompter should have taken his station, where his brother sits of the Italian stage, to have been able to give him the word as often as he wanted it. All his trick and finesse could not conceal from the audience how shamefully he was imperfect.

Four days after, (September the 6th,) Mr. O'Keefe's farce of Peeping Tom began its diverting course, in which I have already spoken of the excellence of Edwin. The little theatre this season abounded in novelties of every attractive form; there were several new performers, whose efforts do not come within my plan, which must be restricted to the striking incidents of the times of which I write.

At the date just mentioned, expired at Baldock, in Hertfordsire, George Alexander Stevens, famous for his very characteristic songs, which for many years were the delight of all convivial societies, and for his lecture on heads, some faint idea of which I derived in my youth from my father, who greatly admired him: I mean as to his manner of deli-

vering it: for Lee Lewes was too inveterate a mannerist to give a notion of his masterly predecessor. I do not think that it was ever carefully and authentically printed, and I am unwilling now to consider a work of infinite humour, in copies long since devoted to the stalls.

In the earlier part of his career, G. A. Stevens seems to have been ambitious of the fame of that irregular humorist, Tom Brown, whose wild necessitous course he repeated, to the regret of his friends, and the disgrace of his genius. Stevens's lecture rendered him at length independent; and in the decline of his faculties he had not to struggle with poverty. In a state of mental imbecility, he is said to have predicted the exact time of his dissolution, and to have verified his prediction.

I will not suppose such a coincidence the result of any particular illumination. We notice the few anticipations of this sort that are realized, and pass over the myriads which the event disproves. But in the close of a fevered and irregular existence, the very conceit of the mind may "tend to rob the treasury of life."

During the summer recess, Mr. Kemble went with his brother Stephen and his very interesting wife to Liverpool and Manchester, where he repeated his favourite performances in town. Mrs. Siddons acted at Edinburgh eleven nights, and on her own night performed Euphrasia. The Scottish gentry distinguished themselves proudly on this occasion, and paid five shillings for a seat in the pit. From Edinburgh she went to Dublin, where a splendid engagement attended her, 1000 guineas and a benefit. Cork, too, produced a very important addition, for her gains were altogether estimated at 3500*l.* on this tour of summer amusement. More might have been done, but that she was taken ill; and this very illness was the cause of a cruel attack upon her, which strove to injure her success, by insinuations that she wanted the kindly feelings of her profession. Great care was taken to notice any casual appearance of Mrs. Abington at the summer theatre; and the applause of Miss Farren by that lady was praised as a mark of becoming liberality in a great genius, above so pitiful a feeling as jealousy. It was strenuously asserted, that Mrs. Siddons never did applaud any actress upon the stage; and that, beside the refusal of this cheap acknowledgment of their merits, she was become mercenary to her brethren, and forgetful of the difficulties from which she had so happily emerged; the writers added, that greatly as the public had rewarded her exertions, it was especially incumbent upon her to reflect on others the bounty which had so illus-

trated herself and family. There was, ultimately, no doubt whatever, that these insinuations were kept up in town by a foul and malignant conspiracy; and they put on the various garbs of reports, sometimes given with regret, at others with indignation; seasoned with occasional fears, that there must be something in them; and hopes, rather faintly coloured, that all might be explained to the satisfaction of the public. In plain terms, it was resolved, on her ensuing appearance at Drury Lane, to drive her with insult from the stage, and blight, if not destroy, the laurels she had proudly worn. In the succeeding chapter, the success of these base arts will be given somewhat in detail.

Henderson made a very profitable excursion this summer to Edinburgh, and afforded that enlightened capital the opportunity of comparing his Hamlet particularly with what Kemble had so recently displayed. He was considered to be one of the most judicious actors that had ever appeared there; and, like Garrick, he could avail himself of infinite versatility to complete his charm. With Hamlet, he also gave Shylock, Falstaff, Macbeth, Don John, and he repeated the fat Knight for his benefit.

As the deputy manager of Drury Lane Theatre, and a gentleman of considerable talent, it is proper for me to notice the death of Mr. Joseph Younger, at Liverpool, on the 3d of September, in his 50th year. He was proprietor of the Liverpool and Manchester theatres. As an actor he was but indifferent in any line, and extremely limited in all; yet he had a sound judgment, and very extensive professional knowledge. To show the fluctuation of popular favour, it may be as well to record that, about seven years before Mr. Younger's death, he found himself at Mattocks's theatre, in Birmingham, opposed to Henderson, who was at Yates's in the same town. The play was Lear, at both houses, and thus curiously contrasted in the principal characters:

'*Lear* - - - Henderson against Younger.
Cordelia - - The Siddons and Mrs. Mattocks!!'

The great talents played to about half the nightly charges, and the house of their surprising rivals literally overflowed.

The discovery of genius sometimes seems almost as miraculous as the possession of it.

Mr. Younger had much of the indiscretion which attaches to his profession, and one in addition, which seldom applies to the professors of the stage. He had wealthy relations, and formed expectations which were disappointed. He died con-

siderably indebted ; to the elder Colman 1200*l.*; to Garton, the treasurer of Covent Garden, as much as 5000*l.* The latter took security; a mortgage upon the Liverpool and Manchester theatres.

I confess myself half tempted to omit the mention of one of those atrocious violations of good taste and decency, the change of sexes altogether, in the performance of the Beggar's Opera, which was perpetrated on the 26th of August, for the benefit of the elder Bannister. Mrs. Wells was the Macheath ; Mrs. Lefevre, Peachum ; Mrs. Webb, Lockit ; Mat o' the Mint, Miss Morris, (afterwards Mrs. Colman ;) Ben Budge, Mrs. Inchbald ! Old gigantic Bannister himself was the Polly ; Edwin, Lucy.

The enormous absurdity of such a cast was the *humour* of the performance. Bannister, though he sang the airs of Polly chiefly in falsetto, spoke occasionally in the voice of Grimbald ; and the feminine refinements of mamma and papa, from such an organ, exceeded all power of face. Edwin, who was an accomplished singer, kept the *music* of Lucy from violation; and he did not encroach much upon the measure of vulgar violence, tolerated from even women of character, in this lover of strong cordials. Mrs. Webb in Lockit, was infinitely too true for burlesque ; she looked as if she had never been out of either breeches or Newgate. My late friend, Major Topham, was, at this time, at the *top* of his bent of admiration of Mrs. Wells, and the journals teemed with his praises of her Macheath, which he pronounced, seriously, to be, by many degrees, the best that had ever been seen.

I consider this opera to have been the first of a series of systematic attacks, the object of which was the degradation of the higher orders, by attributing to them the vices of the lower. It would be obvious to any sound thinker upon such a subject, that if you can destroy the traditional and voluntary, or involuntary, RESPECT paid to rank and station, those distinctions themselves may be speedily swept away. If you show, that they have the vices, without any of the necessities which conduct to them in lower conditions, you, in fact, elevate morally the low above the high. If you insinuate, in addition, that the punishment of such vices only attends their vulgar practice, you dethrone the majesty of justice itself, and preach open hatred and war against a system, which is terrible only to the poor, and lends itself to protect or palliate the crimes of the great and the wealthy.

CHAP. IX.

Winter season of 1784–5.—*Return of Mr. King to Drury Lane Theatre.—Sheridan.—Mr. Kemble and the author in his library.—Unread plays.—Sheridan's habits.—Mr. King and his address.—Felt the public pulse as to Mrs. Siddons.—Digges and Brereton.—First appearance for the season of Mrs. Siddons.—Addresses the audience.—Her triumph.—The true question considered.—Provincial excursions.—Views of the profession.—Former times.—Covent Garden.—Holman.—Fawcett and Morton.—Macklin admires Holman.—Dignum.—His first appearance.—Mrs. Siddons in the Carmelite.—Cumberland's strange epilogue.—Arthur and Emeline.—Mrs. Wells's imitation of the two great tragic actresses.—Dr. Johnson's Death.—His funeral.—Beaumarchais' Figaro.—That author's impudence.—Cumberland's Natural Son.*

The winter season of 1784–5 opened with one favourable circumstance, the return of Mr. King to Drury Lane Theatre. He accepted the management of the stage, disclaiming, however, very particularly, the having any power whatever as to the acceptance or rejection of the usual literary offerings to the theatre. This department was principally assumed by Mr. Sheridan himself, who had neither leisure nor inclination to attend to it. Melancholy proofs of this appeared in piles of long forgotten tragedies and comedies, which he had promised to consider, and had never opened. Mr. Kemble, whom I one day found sitting very patiently in this great man's library, pointed to this *funeral* pile, and added to his action the declaration of his belief, that in these morning attendances, he had read more of these productions than ever had been or would be read by the proprietor himself.

Sheridan's habit was to keep his visitors distributed variously, according to their rank or intimacy with him. Some, like ourselves, penetrated into the library; others tired the chairs in the parlours; and the tradesmen lost their time in the hall, the butler's room, and other scenical divisions of the premises. A door opening above stairs, moved all their hopes below: but when he came down his hair was drest for

the day, and his countenance for the occasion; and so cordial were his manners, his glance so masterly, and his address so captivating, that the people, for the most part, seemed to forget what they actually wanted, and went away, as if they had come only to look at him. This is, in truth, here written by anticipation; at this time, I had not the honour to be known to Mr. Sheridan. To return, therefore, to the great comedian, King.

It was on the 30th of September, that, after a retirement of two years, he resumed his professional labours in his favourite part, Lord Ogleby. He wrote and spoke an address, which, I believe, threw a comic mask over a real necessity. However this might be, the public were gainers by the event, for his were powers undiminished, and then, and since then, unequalled. His address contained an allusion to his late friend, Garrick, and one to the splendid talents* of Mrs. Siddons. By the latter he might be supposed to feel the public pulse: for that great actress was shortly to appear, and the attacks made upon her in the newspapers had excited universal attention to her private character, or rather her *personal* conduct in the profession. The charges of most moment against her were, that she had at first refused to play for Mr. Digges's benefit, but had at length taken 50*l.* and played for him. As to Brereton, she had disappointed his expectations altogether, and refused to perform on any consideration.

As Mrs. Siddons was to act on the 5th of October, and it was quite certain that attempts would be made to annoy her, Mr. Siddons on the 30th of September sent the following letter to the editors of the daily papers.

"Sir,

"I am unused to write for public inspection, but I will not hesitate to state the truth; and I think the generous and candid will excuse the rest. I therefore declare that Mrs. Siddons never wished, asked, nor accepted a single farthing from Mr. Digges; and that, a few days after his benefit, that gentleman acknowledged his obligations to her by a very polite note, which Mrs. Siddons (not expecting so malignant an attack) destroyed.

"With regard to Mr. Brereton, so far from refusing to perform for him, she agreed to do it for a much smaller sum

* This appears to have been what Mr. King meant; but it is dangerous to use ambiguous phrase in an allusion. His words were, "living worth;" and this was a term which there were many disposed to deny to be a just one, when applied to the lady in question. About her powers as an actress the dispute could only be, whether she indeed surpasssed all others?

than she was to receive from any other comedian, though every performer for whom she played gave her considerably less than the manager paid her nightly for twenty nights together; but just as the benefits were commencing, she was taken ill, and confined to her bed nearly a fortnight. When she recovered, her strength would not permit her to perform, *immediately*, MORE THAN THREE NIGHTS A WEEK: and as the manager expected his engagement fulfilled, and was to leave Dublin at a particular time, she was obliged to forego the performing for Mr. Brereton; she, after that, made another attempt to serve him; why it failed, Mr. Brereton can truly tell; but I will be bold to assert, without affording the smallest ground for any charge against Mrs. Siddons. These are solemn facts, on which I leave the public to judge. Animadversions on her public performance, and the questioning of her professional talents, I shall ever submit to; feeling that those, who so liberally reward her exertions, have the best right to judge of their degree of merit, and to praise or censure them, as they think proper; but all attacks upon her private conduct, that, if unnoticed, would deservedly lower her in the estimation of the public, and render her less worthy of their favour and kindness, I hold myself bound to answer.

"W. SIDDONS.

"*Thursday, Sept.* 30."

I remember there were many objections at the time to this letter. There were persons who thought that it would have been better to meet the question on the principle at once; and to have asserted, that there could be no obligation on the part of Mrs. Siddons to play for the benefit of any performer, paid, or unpaid; they thought too, that the petty huckstering of a *smaller* sum from Brereton than others, was injustice towards them, and must be trifling as to him; that "the *other* attempt to serve him" was quite unintelligible, as Mr. Siddons put it, and Brereton's subsequent letter did not make it clear. A few might, indeed, bestow a little attention upon the state of the actress herself, whose strength was so mercilessly tasked for money; and of whom we learn, that after being confined to her bed nearly a fortnight, as she gained strength, she was ONLY, *immediately*, *able to act* THREE TIMES A WEEK, as a summer relaxation, such parts as Belvidera, and Isabella. What her more confirmed health might allow, is left to imagination, and the number of acting nights in a week.

But of all the wretched things that were ever drawn reluctantly from a man, the letter of Brereton himself was the

coldest and most unsatisfactory: it was addressed to Mr. Siddons, and should be preserved.

"SIR.

"I AM concerned to find Mrs. Siddons has suffered in the public opinion on my account. I HAVE TOLD YOU BEFORE, and I again repeat it, that, to the friends I have seen, I have taken pains to exculpate her from the least unkindness to me in Dublin. I acknowledge she *did* agree to perform at my benefit, for a less sum than for any other performer, but her illness prevented it: and that she *would* have played for me after *that*, had not the night been appointed after she had played three times in the same week, and *that* the week after her illness: and I am very willing you shall publish this letter, if you think it will be of the least service to Mrs. Siddons, to whom I am proud to own many obligations of friendship.

"I am, Sir,

"Your very humble servant,

"W. BRERETON.

"*Sunday, October* 3, 1784."

Cold comfort as this trash held out, it was eagerly accepted by Mr. Siddons, whose melancholy notice of one epistle, and hint for another, were thus expressed:

"Mr. Siddons cannot withold his public thanks from Mr. Brereton, for his obliging letter, and he has no doubt but Mr. Digges will, in a little time, furnish Mrs. Siddons with another written testimony, that will entirely confound the artful schemes of her detractors."

On the Monday, the letter and the thanks appeared in the newspapers. The public was certainly not inclined to think the second merited by the first. On the Tuesday, Brereton went again to work, and produced the following letter to the printers or editors of the daily papers:

"SIR.

"Having been informed that the letter signed by me in the several morning papers of yesterday, respecting Mrs. Siddon's conduct to me while in Ireland, has not been so clearly understood, as it was both the intention on my part, and justice to her that it should, I think it necessary again to repeat, that it was in no respect owing to Mrs. Siddons that I had no benefit in Ireland; but, *on the contrary*, that in the course of a long and dangerous illness, I received proofs of friendship from her, which I shall ever recollect with gratitude, and avow now with sincere satisfaction.

"W. BRERETON.

"*October* 5, 1784."

To expect that there should be any coherence in such effusions, would indeed be idle. But it might reasonably be demanded, WHO was at all likely to *start* the question of his benefit, but the man *himself?* And it surely became all this GRATITUDE, to have *anticipated* the storm that fell upon his friendly patroness, and not to have waited until she had met its fury, and vindicated herself. But so it was; and on the day after, this miracle of bad construction, bad grammar, and bad logic, made its appearance. But I must now look to the theatre, for the display of what is called the feeling of the PUBLIC, and the very unusual display of the noble woman's own firmness, sense and dignity.

On the 5th of October, she made her first appearance that season, in Mrs. Beverly; she perhaps chose that character, because it allowed her the support of her brother, Mr. Kemble. When the curtain rose they advanced together, and were received with the usual unmeaning clamour and contempt. Finding that *then* nothing could be done, Kemble led her off the stage, and left the very crowded audience to consider, whether they would destroy their own pleasure for the mere rumours of transactions, with which, if true, they had no sort of concern. Symptoms of better temper appearing at length, Mrs. Siddons came on the stage by herself, and advancing to the front, with inimitable grace, thus addressed the audience:

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

"THE kind and flattering partiality, which I have uniformly experienced in this place, would make the present interruption distressing to me indeed, were I in the slightest degree conscious of having deserved your censure. I feel no such consciousness. The stories which have been circulated against me are calumnies. When they shall be proved to be true, my aspersers will be justified; but till then my respect for the public leads me to be confident, that I shall be protected from unmerited insult."

"That strain I heard was of a higher mood." It convinced every one who was worthy to hear it, that she, who could delight the public, claimed to be respected by it. Here was no truckling to an unthinking rabble; but a noble nature demanding protection from undeserved attack. Though she supported herself before the audience with great firmness, and delivered her address with infinite skill, and the finest expression of countenance, yet, when she retired, the highly raised spirits subsided, and left her almost fainting with the exertion. The nerves alone betrayed the woman. Mr. King came forward, and requested a few minutes indulgence for Mrs. Siddons.

who would then endeavour to obey their commands. She was soon sufficiently composed to throw her whole mind into the character of Mrs. Beverly, and perhaps never produced greater effect. The audience was particularly brilliant and numerous.

I should add to the above, that Digges directed his son to write the letter so much expected; it stated, "that he had paid to Mrs. Siddons no money whatever, and had written a letter expressing his obligation to her; that as he understood it had been mislaid, he with great pleasure repeated his acknowledgments." The ill-will manifested on the present occasion was not completely banished the theatre, and for many nights a sharp and angry salutation attended the appearance of Mrs. Siddons, which was immediately overborne by the applause of the more polite and judicious part of the audience.

Hitherto all things had proceeded, as to Mrs. Siddons and her brother, in the usual course; they had neither expected nor found any royal road to distinction. Through a course of severe application and provincial engagements, their talents had ripened into perfection; they had been welcomed in the metropolis, and their fame and fortune seemed to be established upon a durable basis. But they who ascend displace others, and it is difficult to submit to even the superiority of a rival. The excellence that could not be denied was therefore discreetly admitted. But the malice that could not lower the professional merits, nor dispute the propriety of its rewards, availed itself from time to time of the gentle insinuations, that it was a great pity so much excellence should be unaccompanied by the most amiable feelings of our nature; and that a liberal bounty towards others might be demanded from those who had benefitted so highly by the public generosity.

In the course of her engagements in the country, Mrs. Siddons, as we have seen, had been solicited to act for the benefit of certain performers. Whether with or without payment, is a matter of only pecuniary moment. The question, as it appears to me, was not whether Mrs. Siddons should or should not lend her aid to make the success of those, who would be neglected but for her attraction, but how far such a claim might be expected to extend? It might be said, as a ground of declining such assistance,—"You, sir, have a high rank in the profession: you have a fixed and handsome income; why should you derive a large accession to it from the mere anxiety of the public to see ME? If, moreover, my efforts can be extended beyond the rights of my own family, without injury to my health, the claim upon me ought to

come rather from the necessitous than the affluent:—they surely are first entitled to my aid, whom it may relieve from embarrassment, and even want."

Indeed, in the country engagements, which had been the consequences of the public avidity to see her, much harm had necessarily resulted to the profession. The manager, by securing a present advantage, had, in fact, injured his permanent interest. The transcendent talent which he had secured, under the pretext of his anxiety to gratify the public, changed altogether the kind of attraction. Instead of relying upon the quiet exertions of a company of respectable actors, he had taught his patrons to despise such common gratifications: they now reserved themselves for the *starry* nights of the season. From that time to this the practice has proceeded, and the manager has to calculate how many grand nights he can procure by a succession of the great performers from London, to make up for the beggarly account of his ordinary receipts. But, as this mischief arose from the London stages, so it returns fearfully upon them. The actor, finding that his fame secures him great advantages in the country, looks with a very different eye upon a town engagement. When first brought out in a provincial theatre, the ultimate hope is a settled engagement in London, that bestows a high degree of respectability in the art, and a competent or affluent income. But afterwards, when the considerations of prudence press, when it is remembered that health is uncertain and the public fickle, the actor will think only of accumulating a fortune that may defy the chances of life, and enable him to retire from the profession, while yet young, rather than be compelled to burthen it when old. He, therefore, learns to dislike engagements that bind him to one spot during so many months of the year, and prefers those for a limited number of nights. The town manager catches at this, as a means of enabling him to vary his attractions, and relieve himself from a weight of dead salary for performers not constantly used. The public here, like that of the provinces, crowd the nights of these stars, as they are called, and neglect the others. But a great injury is done to the art itself. Instead of the smoothness that results from the habit of acting together for a series of years, all is crude and raw in the performance. The hero of the night looks upon the stage as exclusively his own: he settles how the business must be done; decides how much strength shall be left in the other characters; and there is soon no management in the theatre, no union in the company. If novelties are brought out, they cannot be continued by the strength that established them, because the performer, male or

female, may have 20*l.* per night; and to run a piece, so cast, might give a salary of 120*l.* a week.

Before these outrageous demands were made for public gratification, plays were admirably acted by a regular and nearly unchangeable company. Theatres, too, were profitable concerns, and interested nearly alike all the ranks of society. Men of the highest powers enjoyed and took pride in the drama of their country. The pit displayed its prescriptive rows of critics, at the head of whom sat Charles Macklin; while the boxes frequently exhibited, along with the beauty of higher life, the glory of our senate, Pitt, Fox, Burke, Lord Loughborough, and a long train of imitators; and it became an article of attraction in our newspapers, to state, the following day, the names of those who the preceding night had honoured the theatre with their presence. At the same time, the high rank of the frequenters begat a demand for a very careful dress, and polite and accommodating manners, in such as approached them. We had then no such horrors as bears in their own skins, with a dozen capes, like coachmen, standing up in the side boxes with their hats on, insensible of the demands of respect towards the gentler sex; and ready, and even anxious, to crown their insolence, by a boxing match in the lobby. These reflections I have rapidly committed to paper as they occurred to me; less solicitous to throw them into exact method, than to leave them to a calm consideration. They are deeply interesting to an art which I love; and that art has always been deemed of the highest importance to the mind and manners of a country.

On the 6th of October, Mrs. Abington resumed her engagement at Covent Garden, in her favourite character, Maria in the Hypocrite. She was fashionably attended always; and the play was twice repeated in the course of the month.

But on the 23d, Mr. Harris brought out a young gentleman in Romeo, from whom much was expected, and from whom much was derived, though not precisely of the kind which his early promise had held out. I allude to the late Mr. Holman, who unquestionably was highly gifted for the profession. His person was genteel, and his manners extremely prepossessing. His face originally was not only handsome, but expressive; and he had a manly sonorous voice, which, though it had more strength than sweetness, yet discovered no signs of being rebellious to the ear: and as the actor had the character of being a man of study, of judgment and good taste, as he showed high spirit and great ardour to excel, there were very sanguine hopes that he would leave a name in the art of great if not first-rate celebrity.

Mr. Holman was born in August, 1764, in the metropolis, and received his education at Soho School, under Barwis. Morton, his very steady friend through life, was his schoolfellow. A peculiar feature of Soho, at that time, was the relaxation it permitted of acting *English* tragedy and comedy. Holman was certainly the hero of the company. There are still living some persons who saw and admired there his Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Richard III., Prince Hal, and the accomplished Benedick in "Much ado about Nothing."

Mr. Barwis's view in not merely permitting, but urging and correcting such performances, was confessedly to give the pupils a free and unembarrassed manner, and an accurate and powerful elocution, which he concluded to be essential to the display of the sound erudition which occupied their studies. I am not able to state whether the church, or the bar, or the senate, have derived any accession of graceful oratory from the plan; it, I confess, seemed to me, if I may parody the poet,—

Stage-born, and destined to the *stage* again.

Two of the school, have certainly *trod* the stage with great distinction, Holman and Fawcett; and Morton is likely to occupy it as an author, at least as long as any one of his contemporaries. A friendship of thirty years may be supposed to imply some partiality, but, I think, I merely echo here the opinion of the public, His passion for a country life may a little narrow the range of his observation; but he seizes character with great truth and acuteness, and is a most powerful master of the feelings. As a dramatist, he is peculiarly skilful in structure: he binds his matter better together than is usual on the modern stage, of which he has been one of the ablest and most strenuous supporters.

But to return to his friend Holman. That was observable in *his* Romeo, which has constantly attended all the Romeos of my time; namely, he had more of every thing than tenderness. "One touch of nature makes the whole (theatric) world kin," they are all for "Ercles' vein;" and the daily critic invariably passes for praise to the scene with the friar, in the third act. Miss Younge was his Juliet, and she conceived and expressed the early passion of the girl with her peculiar enthusiasm: but the person could not sustain the illusion; her step, though gliding, was yet that of maturity, and though her playfulness of manner by no means offended, yet it could not charm. In her scenes of vehemence, she triumphed over time, and interested beyond the rivalry of even youthful beauty.

Holman would have preferred Macbeth or Richard as his trial part, but he yielded to the advice of Mr. Harris, who thought, that in stamping a first impression, you may as well render the youthful figure available, when it is a fine one; there is less difficulty in assuming old age when we are young, than the stages of life, which are less remote. This was fully verified when he shortly after did play Macbeth, on the 12th of November. His slim juvenile form, his ardent mind, his hurried step, were all uncharacteristic of Macbeth. He had been entered of Queen's College, Oxford, and intended for the church; had the reputation of Greek literature, and some opinion, therefore, attached to his judgment. I know not how classical studies may prepare for the actor's art, but Henderson, one of the most learned in his profession, and the most subtle of readers, had not even the advantages of a great public school in the forming of his mind.

One advantage the actor may certainly derive from academic studies; he will learn to value himself, and prefer through life the associations of his youth. His habits will therefore rarely be low, and his conduct will for the most part support the dignity of the scholar and the gentleman. An actor who feels a pride that Oxford was a mother to him, will usually take care that she do not blush for her son.

Macklin praised him for the *nature* he displayed in his performance of Macbeth; but I found the Nestor of the stage sufficiently flexible in his opinions. He had made his peace with the manager, and was therefore then disposed to forward the objects of Mr. Harris, who took up Holman with great warmth. One topic of his commendation was suited to the meridian of vulgar criticism. "I like the young fellow, Sir; he introduces no NEW READINGS in the part." Macklin could not but know, that this, if it had been true, would have been equivalent to a declaration, that he did not THINK for himself; for any original thinker must materially differ from others. Genius is always peculiar. There was but one man upon the stage who troubled them with any thing of the sort, and that was Kemble. The only question should have been, are they RIGHT readings? If they be, no matter by what great men they may have been missed. The truth is, that indolent self-sufficiency receives all new discovery as a personal insult. Kemble, more or less, was treated in this way through life. He despised both the folly of it and the malignity, and continued in his course.

A person like the present writer, long familiar with the stage, is often very strangely affected in his common walks for exercise or amusement, I this very day met, in his dining costume of black coat and white waistcoat, but walking rather uneasily to himself, Charles Dingum; whom I am here to record as having made his first appearance in London, at Drury Lane Theatre, in the character of Young Meadows, on the 14th of October, 1784, nearly thirty-nine years ago. He was a pupil of Linley's, and preserved the very sweet and simple style taught him by his master, without the smallest ambition for the more florid and ornamented manner introduced from the Italian school.

Mrs. Siddons was now driven, from the desire to vary her attractions, to characters greatly inferior to those in which she had so frequently appeared. Margaret of Anjou and Zara, could add but slenderly to her fame. She, however, added greatly to the fame of Cumberland, by performing the Countess of St. Valori, in his tragedy of the Carmelite. In character, the Countess somewhat resembled Lady Randolph: she had mourned for twenty years a lost husband. It appears that St. Valori, recovering from the wounds he received from the assassin Hildebrand, had been carried into captivity. His son, Montgomery, brought up as a peasant, and then received as a page by his own mother, at length attaining manhood is made the challenger of the Baron Hildebrand, who coming over to answer the challenge, is shipwrecked on the Isle of Wight, and saved by his antagonist. Disguised as a Carmelite, he brings over unconsciously in his train St. Valori himself, who entertains a jealousy at the favour which Montgomery enjoys at the castle. Cumberland but works out the hint of such indecent passion given by Home in Douglas. On these occasions, the relative ages of the parties is always judiciously forgotten; and the invariable return made for twenty years of exemplary piety and fidelity, is always a jealousy in the husband, refuted by character, disparity, and probability; and for which no ground can possibly exist, out of the most impure and frantic imagination.

The scenes of Mrs. Siddons and Kemble were very finely acted: the play ended happily, and did as much as, perhaps, can be expected from modern tragedy: the effect, altogether solemn and strange, was not unlike that produced by modern Gothic; it forcibly reminded you of that ancient and mysterious excellence, which it could but imperfectly imitate. Agreeably to the custom, to see the lady the epilogue, Mr. Cumberland sent on Mrs. Siddons with a most lame and im-

potent conclusion indeed. After talking of the Greek tragedians, who painted women, one *as they ought to be*, the other *as they are*,—and, begging pardon for bringing his name so near those of an immortal fame,—and all the time as totally forgetting Shakspeare, as if HE had no pretensions to paint the *female* character, he makes his majestic heroine utter the following nonsense to the brilliant circle around her :—

> "If you have faults, alas! he bids me say,
> O that his wish could charm them all away!
> For if no cure but caustics can be found,
> He will not make a sore to heal a wound;
> If you have faults, they're faults he won't discover;
> To your own sex he begs to bind you over.
> So many ladies now there are who write,
> You'll hear of all your trips some winter's night:
> Since Pegasus has learn'd the jadish trick
> To bear a side-saddle, *you'll find him* KICK."

After which delicate admonition, this beautiful and interesting woman had to recover her dignity and testify her respect, and bow herself off the stage.

On the 16th November, O'Keefe brought out at Covent Garden his very diverting opera of Fontainbleau, or Our Way in France. It is even yet occasionally acted, and was extremely productive to the theatre.

At Drury Lane a great deal of pains had been taken with a masque, called Arthur and Emmeline, an alteration of Dryden's King Arthur, or the British Worthy. Miss Farren was the heroine, and her innocent blindness interested in a very high degree. Kemble sustained Arthur in a most chivalrous style, and the Grimbald and Philadel of Bannister and Miss Field (not to speak it profanely) formed no despicable stage companion to the magic of the Tempest. Linley made some tasteful additions to the divine music of Purcell. The alliance between that great composer and Dryden, is thus celebrated by the poet in his beautiful dedication of the piece to the Marquis of Halifax :

"There is nothing better than what I intended, but the music, which has since arrived to a greater perfection in England than ever formerly; especially passing through the artful hands of Mr. Purcell, who has composed it with so great a genius, that he has nothing to fear but an ignorant, ill-judging audience. But the numbers of poetry and vocal music are sometimes so contrary, that in many places I have been obliged to cramp my verses, and make them rugged to the reader, that they may be harmonious to the hearer; of which I have no reason to repent me, because these sorts of

entertainments are principally designed for the ear and eye; and therefore, in reason, my art on this occasion, ought to be subservient to his."

Mrs. Crawford resumed her original part of the Grecian Daughter, on the 29th of November; and on the 13th of the following month, supported Holman's Achmet, by performing Zaphira, in Barbarossa. But this season made it clear, that this lady could no longer maintain a competition with her younger rival. The exigencies of management appeared to me to have too sedulously prolonged the contest. Enough still remained to show how formidable she would have been, could she have preserved the entire powers that once captivated Barry.

That surprising mimic, Mrs. Wells, used to give a scene of the two great actresses in Shore and Alicia. Of Mrs. Siddons, she gave all that *could* be imitated; and the truth and almost identity, with which she spoke as Mrs. Crawford, "What whining wretch art thou?" though not in the least caricatured, yet told the ear that harmony was not a little invaded by the harshness of the utterance.

Holman had interposed Don Felix, in the Wonder, between his tragic performances, and there seemed to have been too great hurry, in forcing him into various characters, for which he could have only juvenile preparation.

The historian of the stage is called upon to notice, particularly, the death of any of its ornaments. Dr. Johnson expired at seven o'clock on the evening of the 13th of December, 1784. His having contributed to form so fine a genius as Mr. Garrick; his tragedy of Irene; his matchless prologue upon the opening of Drury Lane Theatre, in 1747; his edition of Shakspeare; all connect him powerfully with my present subject. He had, in addition, received Mrs. Siddons with admiration, and complimented her with elegant neatness: he conversed freely and cordially with Kemble; and though in a great measure disqualified for the full enjoyment of a theatre, yet the actors were always proud of his presence among them; and his appearance in a side-box, was by the audience deemed equivalent to the appearance of Cato among the Romans. His friends, Dr. Goldsmith, Colman, and Murphy, I believe were usually complimented by his attendance on the first night's performance of their plays.

It has been said, that he had no great opinion of the power of the stage to enforce the conceptions of the dramatic poet; and it is probable, that he never heard the famous soliloquies of Hamlet or Cato so well declaimed from the stage, as they were given by his own impressive mode of recitation; but

Dr. Johnson could not really undervalue scenical exhibition: the many are still taught by the actor, and even the learned, for the greater part, have something to acquire from the skilful tragedian. If Johnson could say to Garrick, during an interval even of his Lear, "Punch has no feelings," Mr. Burke, before the assembled senate of the country, alluded to him as their master in elocution, and the house had nearly voted him the sole exception to a standing order.

Dr. Johnson's life has been written in a very able manner by Sir John Hawkins and by Mr. Murphy, both of them honoured with his peculiar intimacy, and upon full knowledge. In addition to which, Mr. Boswell, with a zeal which has never been equalled, and ability never at any time surpassed, has enabled every future age to possess the colloquial wisdom and wit of that amazing man. In this allusion to his work, I was about to call him the *late* Mr. Boswell; but that epithet, alas! is appropriated to my young friend, his son; who, with the characteristic perseverance and affection of his name, but just delivered Mr. Malone's improved edition of Shakspeare to the world, and was then hurried prematurely to the grave. What difficulties he had in that laborious work, I know; but his temper disarmed even controversy of its asperities, and he will merit and receive nothing but praise, from the manner in which he discharged the trust devolved upon him.

The biographers of Dr. Johnson have left me nothing to add but the names of those distinguished friends, who, on the 20th December, followed his remains to the poetic division of Westminster Abbey.

> "Where Shakspeare's image, from it's hallow'd base,
> Seem'd to prescribe a grave, and point the place."

His *executors*, Sir John Hawkins, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Dr. Wm. Scott.

His *pall-bearers*, Sir Charles Bunbury, Sir Joseph Banks, Edmund Burke, William Windham, Bennet Langton, and George Colman, Esquires.

The Reverend Dr. Horsley and Dr. Farmer, General Paoli, Dr. Brocklesby, Dr. Burney, the Rev. Mr. Strahan, Mr. Seward, Mr. Ryland, Mr. Cruikshank, Mr. Hoole, Mr. Nichols, Mr. Sastres, Mr. Dumoulin, with many others, as *mourners*.

His friend, the Rev. Dr. Taylor, performed the burial office, attended by *some* gentlemen of the Abbey. The Cathedral Service was withheld from this most determined defender of the church. I am willing to hope, upon some indispensable

rule; but I fear the money was *taken* for the ground, when it might have been honourably refused.

It has so happened that I have to commemorate the death of the moral *sage*, and the triumph of a gay and profligate author, on the same week in this great city. But so it is, as Johnson has himself told us, "the reveller is hastening to his revels, while the mourner is burying his friend."

Mr. Holcroft brought out, on the 14th of December, his translation of Caron de Beaumarchais' comedy, *La folle Journee* ou *le Mariage de Figaro*. Perhaps, even at this distance of time, the follies of a day may justify a rather detailed consideration. In Paris this play was pronounced by the king utterly unfit for representation. But upon its great success at Versailles, an attempt was made to bring it out secretly in the capital, which was interdicted by an express order from the king, on the very day of its intended performance. It was, I think, one of the errors of the old French government, that the power of the sovereign was too generally, and even frivolously, called into action. He was mixed up with every thing, and thus rendered obnoxious by a continual opposition to what were made to become the wishes of the people.

Beaumarchais was a man of the genuine French character, bold and yet supple, intriguing and persevering. He allowed M. Gaillard, a member of the Academy, to make some slight alterations, and it was then acted at the house of the Comte de Vaudreuil. But at length he had among the profligates of Paris, sufficient interest to get the prohibition of the sovereign himself withdrawn, and his play was exhibited with unprecedented success at the theatre Français on the 27th April. A most enlightened critic of that day has left us his account of its reception, which I shall use in the succinct narrative I am writing. So great was the eagerness for this forbidden fruit, that the desire of distinction itself gave way, and females of all ranks were contented to enjoy their amusement side by side. However the sober part of society might declaim against the libertinism of the play, one thing could not be denied on its performance, that it was a too faithful mirror of the vices and irregularities of fashionable life. It was even said, that the boldness and fidelity of his picture were absolutely essential to the correction of the mischief. But a very little attention to his play made it too apparent that moral amendment never could for a moment have been the object of the writer. The characters wore their frailties much too unblushingly to strike the conscious spectator with any thing like shame; it produced rather an open enjoyment of indiscretions, that, if they had been

practised in private life, had been decently covered from general observation. Figaro is a dauntless and intriguing servant. Almaviva, tired of his wife, is represented as seducing her attendant, and also pursuing the daughter of his gardener. We have a page too in this erotic assembly, beautiful as love himself, passionately enamoured of the Countess, but also inflamed at the sight of every other handsome woman. And the Countess herself, susceptible far beyond the distinct avowal of any female of decent manners, indulging her feelings in a sport, that however begun, usually terminates in earnest. Here is only the miserable choice between the absolutely corrupt and those on the very verge of becoming so. If such was the range of the author in sketching the tender passion, he took a still wider in lashing all the authorities of the state, and all the leading characters and institutions to which he had ever found himself obnoxious. Circumstances conspired to elevate this graceful Belial upon the altar of fashion—the whole nation became his worshippers, and Figaro was a new religion. How it was acted in Paris, I cannot be expected to tell. Even the divine genius of Mozart has been exerted to consecrate the drama of Beaumarchais, and the *Follies of a Day* have been rendered *eternal.*

Dr. Johnson has said that, "where there is shame, there may in time be virtue." Beaumarchais, as far as he had power, compelled all who had the desire to see his drama, to exhibit publicly their weakness or their vice. The impudence of what follows will not easily be paralleled. He circulated a story that the Duke de Villeguier had asked him for a private box, that certain ladies might, unseen, be present at his Figaro. In the true spirit of Rousseau's preface to the Nouvelle Heloise, he thus replies to him :

"I have no consideration, M. le Duc, for ladies who allow themselves to see a spectacle which they deem indecent, provided they can see it in secret. I can never lend myself to such whimsies. I have given my play to the public to amuse, not to instruct it ; and certainly not to afford the affectedly decent an opportunity of secretly enjoying and publicly condemning it. But the prudery of the present age would conciliate the pleasures of vice with the honours of virtue. My piece is no equivocal production. It must be adopted or fled. I salute you, M. le Duc, and shall keep my box."

In the circulation of this impertinence, sometimes the Duc D'Aumont was said to be the peer to whom it was addressed. But he was compelled to contradict the report, and avow that it was in fact written to his friend M. Du Paty, President of

the parliament of Bordeaux, who had requested the box for a *lady and her daughters!* The nobility having cleared themselves from the charge, were contented to enjoy the laugh where the author had directed it; and thought more of their order, than the morals of the nation.

Beaumarchais, by the time that his play attained its fiftieth night, had made 36,000 livres (1500 pounds sterling) by his profits as author, with a still progressive interest on the stage. He had not yet printed it, in order the stronger to attach the public to the representation. But he announced his intention to compose a preface, in which his production should be proved to be the most decent comedy on the stage, and at the same time highly favourable to public morals. Here however his great master of Geneva finessed beyond him, for with relation to his Julie, he thus expresses himself in his preface: "J'ai vules mœurs de mon tems, et j'ai publié ces lettres. Que n'ai je vécu dans un siecle ou je dusse les jetter au feu!"

"They pleas'd their times, and did not wish to mend."

I have never been at the trouble to examine the extent of Mr. Holcroft's dealings with the Follies of a Day. He should have been kept from a personal folly on the first night, to which the grossest vanity must have conducted him: he actually performed Figaro himself. Those who remember the person, the countenance, the gait of Mr. Holcroft, will confess the absolute necessity which existed for turning over the part to Charles Bonner; who was a sprightly actor, with a very bright and sparkling expression of face, and a neat and well compacted person of the middle size. Mr. Bonner was a man of talent, and, as I know, sustained for Palmer the laborious task of digesting and maturing the mail coach plan; one of the happiest combinations that ever facilitated the commercial intercourse of a great people. The Follies of a Day were too mercurial for the dull English. The charm was not translated; it remained in Paris. The ghost of French wit only walked six *successive* nights among us.

Mr. Cumberland had now got possession of Drury Lane, and was contented to pocket the unredeemable affront of Sir Fretful. His Carmelite had shown the best specimens of his tragic style, but the Natural Son never approached the comic dialogue of the West Indian. This comedy appeared at Drury Lane Theatre on the 22d of December. There is ample evidence in his Observer, that Mr. Cumberland was one of the ablest dramatic critics of our country. He ana-

lyses a comedy, ancient or modern, with the happiest skill, and feels every resort of interest developed in the progress of the fable. In his own comedy, the whole interest was exposed and exhausted in the second act, and three additional courses were served up, after every body had dined. It maintained itself the first three nights, and then received the support of the Christmas pantomime.

CHAP. X.

Mr. Pope's Oroonoko.—Massinger's Maid of Honour.—Mrs. Siddons in Lady Macbeth.—Smith in Macbeth.—Packer in Duncan.—George Steevens attacks the Banquet Scene.—That Play repeated by royal command.—The king's notice of Henderson's Benedick.—Imperfect once in this character.—The Orphan.—Holman's Hamlet.—Henderson's readings at Freemason's Hall.—Le Texier in Lisle street.—Compared with each other.—Theatres resumed. Othello.—Mr. Kemble in the Moor.—His sister in Desdemona.—Depreciated.—Great excellence exemplified.—They read to their majesties.—Mr. Kemble for his benefit acts Macbeth.—Critical dispute.—Mason's Elfrida.—Mrs. Siddons in that part.—The original Tempest acted.—Inadvertency of the Poet.—Mrs. Siddons acts Rosalind.—Mrs. Bellamy.—Her Benefit.

On the 8th of January, 1785, an actor, who has now been near forty years among us, made his first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre in the character of Oroonoko. I allude to the performance of Mr. Pope. The policy of the manager led him to give Mr. Holman a rival at starting, as one mode of insuring his utmost efforts, and also perhaps of moderating his demands. There might too be a feeling, that something more tender than Holman was still the *desideratum* of the stage. The silver tones of Barry yet lingered in the ear, and the voice of Mr. Pope was unquestionably a very fine one. His person too was really very elegant, and his excellence as a painter gave him that knowledge of expression and picturesque effect, which comes very powerfully in aid of the other requisites for the stage.

The opinion originally formed of this actor, I cannot think ever materially varied. There was in his cadence a disposition to throw the voice upward unnecessarily, and this even injured the display of its powerful tone—had he declaimed more upon a level, his organ would have produced a greater effect, and perhaps the meaning would have been better conveyed. There always seemed to be more effort than was absolutely necessary. Perhaps too his ear was not critically accurate. He was, from his outset, a very able performer, and

although not what I should style a great and original artist, yet it may be said of him that his talents were highly essential in the composition of a good company; and from his manners and accomplishments he powerfully aided the increasing respectability of the profession. Mr. Pope was invariably, I believe, thought a handsome man, but his countenance never augmented the effect of his pathos; its expression was either feeble, or seemingly differed from the characteristic of the emotion.

When on the 19th he was completely known by his performance of Jaffier, it was considered that he rather gained than lost by the *colour* of his first character.

Holman had been hurried on to the exhibition of his Richard III., which I well remember. There was energy unfailing, but a want of discrimination. Surely the manager must have leant to youthful effort very decidedly, to think of Holman as a Richard, when Henderson was in his theatre. I freely admit, however, that the treasury must be deemed a very competent critic; but writing now with the knowledge that this was the last year of Henderson, and that he was snatched away from us at the early age of forty, one is hurt to think that there should have been a disposition to divest him of any of his honours, and that his exquisite judgment and masterly elocution did not secure for him *all* the leading characters of Shakspeare, both tragic and comic.

At Drury Lane Theatre Mr. Kemble brought out on the 27th, his alteration of Massinger's Maid of Honour. It would ask a long dissertation to show the cause of the slender popularity of Massinger. This was by no means a successful revival. Mr. Kemble contented himself with the modest character of Adorni. Mrs. Siddons supported the Maid of Honour with much grace and sweetness; but she in vain tried to give a comic effect to the epilogue supplied by the elder Colman. The gaiety of Mrs. Siddons did not excite mirth—it was patience smiling at grief—it was the condescension of tragedy. The critics of that day, for once, were unanimous, that it would be better to trust such things to Miss Farren, or Miss Pope.

The maids of honour of the court had distinguished themselves, at this time, by some singular marks of spirit, and Colman played upon the incident, with his usual whim—but Mrs. Siddons probably disappointed the author's expectation, and suffered, unecessarily, by comparison with the favourite organs of the sportive muse.

In looking to the reasons which probably induced Mr. Kemble to revive the Maid of Honour, the principal must have

been that of adding to his sister's attractions. Kept down as he was himself, Adorni could do nothing for him. Bertoldo was a fine showy part for Palmer. The play, however, is not built upon flesh and blood—its interests are the fopperies of our old ponderous romances, and its poetical justice to be awarded only by the 'Parliament of Love.' The audience, I remember, was cold to it—to the great bulk of them it must have been utterly unintelligible. Camiola ransoms the object of her affection, on condition that he shall marry her—he listens to the temptation which Aurelia holds out, and, against conviction, would break from his engagement to Camiola. Upon coming into her presence he is overwhelmed with her reproaches, and sues to be forgiven. Aurelia too releases him from his second engagement. Then, the Maid of Honour, with a nicety peculiar to her character, refuses him absolutely, and devotes herself to religion. The priest edifies the assembly with the austerities she is about to practise, and leads her off to consummate the sacrifice. Such is the interest.

Camiola was a new character for Mrs. Siddons; but it was not of the kind demanded by her fame—it was declamatory. Now, certainly among the merits of this transcendent actress, was to be numbered the very finest declamation in the world; but it was asserted that she was for the most part a declaimer only, and indeed that her brother also was a fine reciter of sonorous versification, but unequal to the irregular bursts of passion, as they are found in the page of the genuine interpreter of nature. It was insinuated that some conviction of this deficiency produced Mrs. Siddons's cautious abstinence from the characters of Shakspeare. But that malice must not be expected to be quite guarded, it might have occurred to these critics that Mrs. Crawford's line of character was precisely that of Mrs. Siddons, and indeed for a very sufficient reason, namely that the lead taken by the ladies in our public amusements demanded a kind of exhibition of which the excellencies were more particularly feminine; that they, as might be expected, delighted to see the charms of their sex become almost the arbiters of destiny, and life and empire the playthings of their power. That Shakspeare had exhibited nothing of this sort in his drama was quite apparent for the reasons assigned by his best critic.* There might be found an ad-

* Need I say here that I mean Dr. Johnson? But I will at all events leave no doubt, in what view of his labours, I so esteem him. I term him the best critic, because he has best displayed the genius of Shakspeare; because he has silenced, and for ever, the puny jargon as to the unities, by which his fame was ignorantly assailed. Because, without soaring into a mystic adoration, too flighty to be rational, he has thoroughly estimated his powers

ditional cause in the want of female performers in his times. I always think that he would have written more for the women of his dramas, if he had found female representatives. His taste was too pure and natural to be quite satisfied with the barbered chins of his young men, and the false delicacy with which they mimicked the real properties of the other sex. They could but barely be endured;—whatever may be said, nature forbade them ever to delight. I am aware of Kynaston in a still later age, and his morning rides with women of high rank in Hyde Park. I have just reviewed the Follies of a Day, and shall not enquire the motives of these affected gratifications.

It is sufficient, therefore, in looking to the females of Otway, Southerne, Rowe, and Thomson, with those of the French stage, as translated by Phillips and Aaron Hill, and Murphy,—it is sufficient, I say, to view the space they fill, and the interest they excite, to ascertain why they must ever be the choice of the young actress, and her female admirers. A period, however, arrives, when the ardent affection of early life does not quite agree with the stately figure and powerful expression of the mature actress; at such a time Shakspeare opens the region of majesty and power; of ambition, and disdain, and dispair, of guilt and terror; and FORCE confirms the triumphant reign, that commenced with the gentler affections. Although, in point of fact, the time of life to which I allude had not yet arrived, and that Mrs. Siddons, as either maid, wife, or daughter, had sufficient personal charms (indeed when had she not?) to require no grains of allowance in the performance of the long line of tender and graceful heroines, it yet was wise to show that she could gain the utmost heights of tragedy, and astonish at least as much as she had delighted. Her benefit, therefore, on the 2d of February, exhibited this great actress in the crown of all her achievements, Lady Macbeth. And, certainly, if ever the slanderer of excellence was put to shame, as well as flight, it must have been at this noble exhibition. Language seemed really to sink under her eulogists. It was the triumph of the art; it was at once, simple, grand, and striking; it was such an impersonation as Raffaele might have conceived, had Shak-

and his intentions; and supplied such a preface to his works, as will, under no changes of fashion, be ever separated from that immortal series.

As the laborious collectors of every thing connected with the poet's history, or that of the stage, I feel grateful to Mr. Malone and Mr. Chalmers. As supplying the ablest illustrations from the writings of his contemporaries, the three great commentators are certainly Dr. Farmer, George Steevens, and Edward Malone.

speare been his contemporary, and which Reynolds had painted, being so fortunate as to be hers. Sir Joshua on that night occupied his privileged seat in the orchestra, and never availed himself of his other privilege, until the tragic queen had quitted the last scene of *sleeping horrour*. Then,—

"He shifted his trumpet, and only took snuff."

Part of the pit, on this occasion, was laid into the boxes; a practice which can hardly be defended, because an usurpation upon the territory of a most respectable class of admirers. But on such nights, the additional splendour gained by the jewels and feathers of the ladies, made up a *coup d'œil* of the most fascinating description. When I have returned from such exhibitions, it seemed the dispelling of a dream of eastern magnificence. I take the liberty to remark, that there appeared more *soul* in the applause given to these triumphs of Mrs. Siddons, than I have ever felt in the audiences, who were attracted by any succeeding magnet of the drama.

On this occasion, the admirers of Mr. Kemble were compelled to see Smith in the character of Macbeth. That gentleman had attended to none of the hints, gentle or rude, to withdraw from the busy scene. He was criticised rather unmercifully. In the dagger scene, after the bell had given him the invitation to the murder, Smith was too earnest to remember the *stealthy pace*, that he had just prescribed to Macbeth; and though not the stones, yet the stage boards at the wing, "prated rather loudly of his whereabout." This incident was converted into a very unexpected compliment to poor old Packer, "who merited, it was said, as Duncan, special praise in the *sleeping* scene. Any other actor, besides himself, would too probably have been discomposed, by the noise made by Macbeth as he ascended."

Nor did our great actress herself escape the malicious pleasantry of George Steevens, upon her fascinating address at the banquet. With his old allusion to the supposed frugality of Gower Street, he wrote the following masterly insinuation in his usual vehicle. To do him but justice, it is so superior to all other composition of the time, that he might as well have signed it. Those who knew, and most people knew the highly convivial character of Smith, must have enjoyed the imputation so gravely cast upon him.

"THEATRICAL INTELLIGENCE.

"*The Tragedy of Macbeth.*

"Such habits as predominate in the real characters of actors and actresses, are apt to peep through their assumed ones. A stronger exemplification of this remark, perhaps was never seen than in last night's performance of Macbeth at Drury Lane Theatre.

"Mr. Smith, who, during his college life and since, is known to have been an utter enemy to all convivial meetings, and prodigalities of entertainment, gave his welcome to the nobles of Scotland, with the coldness that might have been expected from one, who was compelled to counterfeit an office, from which, had it been real, his heart would have revolted. The consequence was obvious, not a knife or fork was lifted up at his bidding.

"The soul of Mrs. Siddons, on the contrary, (Mrs. Siddons, whose dinners and suppers are proverbially numerous) expanded on this occasion. She spoke her joy on beholding so many guests, with an earnestness, little short of rapture, bordering on enthusiasm. Her address appeared so like reality, that all the Thanes about her seized the wooden fowls, &c. in hopes, alas! to find every dish as warm and genuine as her invitation to feed on it.

"This is no bad opportunity for observing that the common weal may suffer too much from the frequency and luxury of this lady's banquets, not to have an interest in diminishing their numbers, and simplyfying their quality. What would become of *oratory*, should Mr Sheridan the elder die of repletion at her table? What a mortal blow would the *law* receive, if the faculties of Mr. Erskine were 'whelmed under a mass of her tempting viands? And could the art of *painting* have survived the loss of Sir Joshua Reynolds, had he died of indigestion, in consequence of the profuse supper she lately gave him? Let Mrs. Siddons, therefore, be told that as often as she throws out these unsalutary lures to her friends, she sins inexcusably against the interest of the public. She may be pardoned for being too regardless of her own."

(*Public Advertiser, February* 3, 1785.)

I have said that George Steevens was ostentatious. It was at one time his great delight to purvey for the suppers of Henderson. The finest articles of Leadenhall and Covent Garden markets used to solicit his acceptance, as the produce

of the "*farm in Essex.*" Henderson was attached to hot suppers, and at such times, the founder of the feast would drop in after the play, and apologizing to Mrs. Henderson for not drawing to the table (for he never eat supper), request to be indulged with the liberty of mingling in the conversation; and would sit by the window enjoying the pleasure, which his costly vanity had enabled him to bestow. But enough for the present of this singular man, and his persecution of Mrs. Siddons. I shall occupy but little more space in the remaining observations upon the present performance of Macbeth. Some of the other leading characters, however, should here be specified. I cannot find it in my heart to deny any performer of that day his place in the commemoration of that *great feast.*

Brereton was the Macduff; Bensley being unwell, they borrowed Hull from the other house for the Banquo. Old Bannister sang the Hecate in the best style, and the George, and the Phillips, and the Wrighten, at the head of the chorus of witches, gave the usual quantity of personal and vocal charms, in aid of those of the blacker spirits of the night. Linley had taken great care of the music, and it had, perhaps, on the whole, never produced equal delight. But matchless as it is, *per se*, it brings this mighty tragedy too near the character of opera, and the time occupied by the chorusses breaks in dreadfully upon the progression of the interest. Besides, too, that such an undisciplined mass of all ages, and of both sexes, as now occupies the stage, is unavoidably the most opposite thing in the world to the severe character of the play. Although I feel the advantage of spectacle, and, indeed, its absolute necessity to the modern stage, I yet am obliged to say, that candidly reviewing the additions made to the plays of Shakspeare, I know of nothing at all worthy to be connected with his composition. Where Dryden and Davenant failed, it might be idle to expect any thing from Tate. What Cibber has done for Richard the III. forms a solitary exception: it is not barely excusable, it is positively good, if he indeed wrote the masterly soliloquy upon *conscience*, and in any other author "I know no touch of it."

The royal family at this time were particularly attentive to the performances of Mrs. Siddons, and on the 7th of the month Macbeth was repeated by command. His majesty was extremely attached to the stage, and had been greatly delighted at the other theatre, by Henderson's performance of Benedick, in Shakspeare's *Much Ado about Nothing.* He very graciously sent to that great actor a message by Sir Charles Thompson, directly from the royal box: it ex-

pressed not merely the praise of the sovereign, but an intimation that "if the king were manager of a theatre, Mr. Henderson would perform upon the same boards with Mrs. Siddons." His Benedick was indeed a most masterly effort of his art. A thousand little traits of whim and pleasantry sparkled from his luxuriant fancy. It was one of the neatest things in the world as he uttered it, the exit of Benedick, then captivated with Beatrice, "I'll go get her picture." The challenge to Claudio, and the menace, "You'll let me hear from you," merit equal eulogium. It was certainly the finest comic acting in my time. But here was the great difference in these masters of the art, an alteration of sentiment did not with them unsettle a character. Henderson was as truly Benedick when defying Claudio, as when he laughed at him for turning orthographer.

To show that the memory will not always supply that which is known best, that a slight intrusion of other thoughts, a casual noise, some unusual object catching the eye, or any other trivial matter, will sometimes defeat the soundest recollection. Henderson one night got imperfect in Benedick. It was in his soliloquy in the second act, in Leonato's orchard.

"I do much wonder, that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool, when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he hath laught at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn, by falling in love!"

Henderson, after stating his first position, and uttering the separated word *will*, could not supply the following expressions, and made a sudden stop. The prompter, knowing his actor, and supposing it as impossible for the words of Benedick to escape from Henderson's memory as from the prompt-book itself, had for a few minutes quitted his seat at the wing, and in course did not perceive the dilemma. Henderson began again, and stopped precisely at the same word: he then became vexed, and loudly called out *give me the word.* Upon this the audience gave him the usual signs of their favour, and he rose from the seat on which he reclined, and bowed. By this time the prompter, Wild, was returned to his place, the words wanted were given, and he proceeded as usual.

At Covent Garden Theatre, on the 4th of February, the Orphan was done for the purpose of displaying the two new performers. Holman was the Chamont, Pope the Castalio. The noble manner, the dignified and superior carriage of Pope, were highly admired. Holman, to counterbalance the

slightness of his figure, was, perhaps, a little too vehement occasionally, but it was a spirited, sensible performance. Miss Young, the Monimia, was now in earnest thinking of Castalio. Farren, transferred from Drury Lane, was the Polydore.

Holman, on the 15th, took Hamlet for his benefit: it was a bold attempt; but his success justified the measure. There was against him, the prescriptive fame of Henderson at his own theatre, and the powerful impression made by Mr. Kemble at the other. Hamlet's character is to be gathered from himself. He is aware of his own vacillation, and thinks meanly of his nature, on account of that craven scruple that paralyses all his purposes. To such a performance, therefore, Holman could only be competent by a rigid cheque upon himself. To be Hamlet, he must cease entirely to be Holman. This, perhaps, was more than could fairly be expected, and unquestionably, there were passages in which the ardour of the actor hurried him beyond the just temperament of the character; but it was on the whole greatly admired; and in Dublin, I incline to think, where he found an audience of kindred warmth, Holman's Hamlet had at least the preference of the many.

On the 21st of the month, for some reason which has escaped me now, the Critic of Sheridan was played at Covent Garden. Its exhibition was scandalously imperfect, as might be expected, thus got up in haste, and a very rational disturbance restricted its performance to the place of its production.

On the 25th, commenced at Freemasons' Hall, an entertainment, which I have already alluded to, and which was attractive beyond parallel. I speak of Readings by Mr. Sheridan, senior, and Mr. Henderson. The grand room of that building literally overflowed on these nights. Sheridan, to most of his audience, was better known as a teacher of elocution than an actor; his books had established a reputation for accuracy, and although his system of pronunciation is now somewhat neglected, he will seldom be found without authority for what is deemed most capricious. The reader will excuse one instance in proof of this assertion. The word SATIETY, is commonly pronounced, I think, with the full power given to all the letters as they stand, and the accent on the letter *i* in the second syllable. Mr. Sheridan pronounced it as if written *sassiety*. In his justification, let me mention, that throughout the accurate and beautifully printed Homer of Chapman, 1616, this word is spelt and accented saciety, which proves that this imagined innovation was

actually the orthoepy of Shakspeare's age. Mr. Sheridan certainly selected his own readings rather as lessons of instruction than amusement. To Henderson was assigned the romantic, the pathetic, the gay, the humorous, and even the burlesque. His friend Caleb Whiteford, gave him some suggestions: George Steevens probably more. His kind and most affectionate admirer, the Rev. C. Este, was constantly at hand to be consulted, and no man better knew the taste of the public. Then a young man, I had myself the pleasure, at his request, to run through the volumes of the Poetical Calender of Fawkes and Woty, in the search of graceful levities for this great object. Had he lived, there can be no doubt he would have converted this, his peculiar excellence, into a source of annual emolument, greatly exceeding that derived from the theatre. What that equally astonishing person, Le Texier, did by French readings in Lisle street, Mr. Henderson would soon have found it practicable to do in English: nor needed he to have restricted himself to the season of Lent for such exertions. A residence better suited than his actual house in Buckingham street, and a subscription for a course of a limited number of nights, would have settled the success, beyond the resisting power of the patentees, who now, at all events, allow every sort of innovation upon their prerogatives.

Le Texier was at this time attended by a very fashionable circle, at his house in Lisle Street, Leicester Square. My younger readers may thank me for some description of the place and the performance. The whole wore the appearance of an amusement in a private house. On ascending the great stair case, you were received in M. le Texier's library, and from that instant you seemed to be so incontestibly in France (as Sterne has it) that the very fuel was wood, and burnt upon dogs instead of the English grate. You then passed into the reading room, and met a dressed and refined party, who treated him as their host invariably. His servants brought you tea and coffee, in the interval between the readings, silently and respectfully. Le Texier, too, himself, came into the library, at such pauses, and saluted his more immediate acquaintance. A small bell announced that the readings were about to commence. He was usually rather elegant in his dress: his countenance was handsome, and his features flexible to every shade of discrimination. Le Texier *sat* at a small desk with lights, and began the reading immediately upon his entrance.. He read chiefly Moliere, and the *petites pieces* of the French theatre; but how he read them as he did, as it astonished Voltaire, La Harpe, and Marmontel, so it

may reasonably excite my lasting wonder. He marked his various characters by his countenance, even before he spoke, and shifted from one to the other without the slightest difficulty, or possibility of mistake. In Paris, he had at first even changed the dress of the characters rapidly, but still sufficiently: this to our taste was pantomimic, and below him. "He had that within which passeth show,"—a power of seizing all the fleeting indications of character, and "with a learned spirit of human dealing," placing them in an instant before you, as distinct as individual nature, as various as the great mass of society. He did all this too without seeming effort; it was, in somewhat of a different acceptation, a *play* both to him and to his audience. There was no noise; little or no action; a wafture of the hands to one side indicated the exit of the person. I cannot assign a preference to the reading of any one character in the piece; they all equally partook of his feeling or his humour. To my judgment, he was as true in the delicacy of the timid virgin, as in the grossest features of the bourgeois gentilhomme. I will venture to say, that no intelligent visitor of Le Texier can think differently of his astonishing talents.

What was his house is now Bonnet's, the coachmaker's, and looks down upon the square, through Leicester street.

"On flying cars new sorcerers must ride."

Such were the two great readers of the time. Le Texier was, I think, essentially dramatic in his reading. I have heard him read passages from De Lisle, and other modern didactic or epistolary poets; but he required the dramatic form of composition to show the extent of his powers. Henderson was not at all confined. From the prophetic writings in the Old Testament, to the humble prose of Dodsley's Esop, he read in a way so masterly, as to be literally beyond even a partial rivalry. As, to use his own phrase, "he had never studied under any Demosthenes maker," it can only be said that the quality of his *attention* as a reader must have exceeded that of other men; that his taste was surer, and his organs more flexible than theirs. All other readers in my time have wanted diversity: they palled upon the ear. These two alone had the power to fascinate with excellence even beyond the stage itself—because the whole of the characters in a drama were in this way exhibited with equal force of talent, which can never happen in any company of actors upon the stage. Two or three parts there will be finely sustained, and the rest thrown away.

It is, however, after much consideration of the subject, that I am of opinion, the comic theatre of France is much better suited to the reader's desk, than that of our own country. The comedies of our neighbours are more regular, the *liaison* of their scenes renders the business simpler, and gives the interest greater continuity. Our frequent change of scene, where the ear receives *all* the intelligence, begets ambiguity. Our painted scenes are explanations highly essential to our drama.

To resume the progress of our theatres. On the 8th of March 1785, the play of Othello was acted at Drury Lane Theatre: Othello by Mr. Kemble: Desdemona, Mrs. Siddons. The dress of the moor at that time, was a British general officer's uniform, equally improper with the moorish jacket and trowsers of modern times. The general of an Italian state would wear its uniform; he would never be indulged with a privilege of strutting about like 'a malignant and a turbaned turk' at the head of a christian army. Mr. Kemble always played parts of this character very finely. He was grand, and awful, and pathetic. But he was a European: there seemed to be philosophy in his bearing; there was reason in his rage: he acted as if Othello truly described himself, when he calls himself "one not easily jealous." He had never, I think, so completely worked himself into the character as to be identified with it, as was surely the case in his Hamlet, his Macbeth, and his King John. It was, at most, only a part, very finely played. One of the sublimest things in language, the professional farewell of Othello, came rather coldly from him. But I can safely say, that Mr. Kemble's powers were in a state of gradual improvement for twenty years after this performance, until they attained their perfection, at Covent Garden Theatre, in the exhibition of Brutus, Coriolanus, and Cato.

"Tantæ molis erat ROMANAM condere GENTEM."

He had at all times a difficulty to strive with, that would have subdued any moderate love for the profession, an habitual cough, that required to be lulled and soothed, and that in some measure restrained the full flow of his declamation; but his ardour in the cause taught him to surmount this, and every other impediment.

Desdemona was not a character to call forth all the powers of Mrs. Siddons; she is too heroic in her person to be the natural representative of this fond, trusting, meek, and unresisting woman. But she conceived the character per-

fectly, and in the delicacy, anxiety, stupor of the great scenes, and the playfulness and grace of the lighter, left models of thought, and gesture, and tone, to more fragile representatives of the character. I well remember the emotions she excited in me, and, as it seemed, in the audience; but in the page of one critic of the time, I stand confuted on the authority of St. Evremont, who said, it seems, of the modern performers of his times, what I suppose a certain order of critics repeat at all times :—"What ought to be tender is only tenderness; surprise holds the place of emotion, and astonishment of all the genuine passions. Our sentiments are not sufficiently deep; and the affections being but half touched, (*half* touched!) excite in our souls but imperfect movements." A critic does not often know the state of his soul with sufficient accuracy, to account *truly* for these imperfect movements. I confess, without much shame, that I have not the writings of St. Evremont in my library, and have not, therefore, the means at hand of informing myself from the original *what* the translation was intended to convey; but the beginning of it is quite unintelligible as it stands, and it is only safe to pronounce of the English critic's design, which was to depreciate our great actress. I will mention some of her striking points in the performance of this gentle sacrifice, and leave St. Evremont and the critic as I found them.

I question whether equal discrimination was ever before given to the answer of Desdemona to her father before the senate—

> "My noble father,
> I do perceive, HERE, a *divided* duty:
> To YOU I'm bound, &c.
> But *here*'s my husband;"

and in the second act at Cyprus, while expecting the arrival of Othello, and the *endurance* of Iago's ribaldry. The intercession for Cassio, beyond measure winning—

> "What! Michael Cassio,
> That came a wooing with you."

The second scene of the third act had a beauty of expression in the countenance, that offered one of the most striking and variable pictures ever contemplated; it was where Othello, holding her hand, exclaims—

> "This hand of your's requires
> A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,
> Much castigation, exercise devout;
> For here's a young and sweating devil here,
> That commonly rebels."

The surprise arising to astonishment, a sort of *doubt* if she heard aright, and that being admitted what it could *mean*; a hope that it would end in nothing so unusual from him as *offensive* meaning; and the slight relief, upon Othello's adding—

"Tis a good hand, a frank one:"

all this commentary was quite as legible as the text.

The second scene of the fourth act, where Othello speaks too plainly to be misconceived, had beauties that cannot be described: the highest, however, was the deep concern that *Othello* should so grossly err, a feeling that subdued all petulence at being unjustly accused. The delicacy that quite electrified the house in the subsequent address to Iago:—

"*Des.* Am I that name, Iago?
Iago. What name, fair lady?
Des. Such as, she says, my lord did say I was."

Nothing like this, I persuade myself, can be found in any author but Shakspeare; can any other being speak it as Mrs. Siddons did? The kneeling adjuration, the pathos, that swelled upward, as she uttered the words—

"Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense,
Delighted them in any other form;
Or that I do not YET, and ever *did*,
And ever *will*, though he do shake me off
To BEGGARLY DIVORCEMENT, love him dearly."

O no, Monsieur St. Evremont, whatever might occur in your times, these affections were NOT *half*-touched in ours; they were assailed with the fullest power: the lancet was in the centre of the vein, "the life blood followed it."

The late king greatly enjoyed the talents of Mrs. Siddons, and the effect of any new performance was immediately reported to him. Their majesties commanded this play for the 12th, and attended to the whole with the deepest interest. Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble had the honour of reading also, to their royal patrons, at the palace, and the family, in all its branches, testified the greatest zeal to promote their success. Othello was a part which Mr. Kemble was permitted to retain; it gave him one striking opportunity of acting with Mrs. Siddons. As he took Macbeth for his benefit on the 31st, he then showed his deep study of that character; it was, however, for that night only, and Mr. Smith resumed his prescriptive right on the 19th of the following month.

The attention of Mr. Kemble was, about this time, most

particularly excited towards the character of Macbeth, by the publication of a fragment by the late Mr. Whateley, author of *Observations on Modern Gardening*, comparing the two characters of Macbeth and Richard; and as to the article of courage, asserting it "to be in Richard *intrepidity*, and in Macbeth no more than *resolution*: that in Macbeth it proceeds from *exertion*, not from nature; in enterprise he betrays a degree of *fear*, though he is able when occasion requires, to stifle and *subdue* it." To this notion of Mr. Whateley's, Mr. Kemble could by no means assent. It recalled him to a very minute examination of the authorities, and in the following year, 1786, under the title of *Macbeth reconsidered*, he published a small tract in anser to Whateley's Remarks, an essay which he subsequently resumed and augmented.

The great error, which appears to me to have been committed by Mr. Whateley, is the attributing to original disposition what is a change produced in Macbeth by "*supernatural soliciting*"—a train of predictions so rapidly verified in part, as to secure attention, and enforce credit to those which remained yet unfilled. The mind of Macbeth has a decided leaning to superstition; he is a fatalist, and conceives that certain beings may be the organs of destiny. Whoever once admits the predominance of external agency, necessarily remits some of his personal and mental energy. Fate will always bring its decrees to their completion. It is useless to question what has been pronounced by spirits, "to whom all mortal consequences are known." And when at last they are found to have "paltered with us in a double sense," and the illusion, which kept the "word of promise to the ear," is fatally "broken to the hope," nothing but despair can ever rouse those powers which have been enfeebled by expectation, and are palsied by final disappointment.

As to occasional *remissions* of courage, it was by no means difficult for Mr. Kemble to show, that there could be found in Richard instances exactly parrallel with those imputed to Macbeth. The English usurper seemed to Mr. Whateley to be superior in fortitude, because his nature was originally *wicked*, and if his argument proved any thing, it would seem to prove, that the highest degree of courage could not consist with virtue and moral discipline: but Shakspeare meant to show in Macbeth, that in a nature originally GOOD, it could not survive their *loss*.

In the argument, perhaps, Mr. Kemble contended for a longer existence of Macbeth's courage, than it actually had: it died a *natural* death: it was never a brutal daring that looked on good and ill alike; it was the servant of principle,

and could only inhabit a bosom franchised, pure in its allegiance, and just in all its purposes. What it would even "highly, that would it holily." When, therefore, an honourable ambition had once been lured into inordinate desires, and conscience submitted to means equally impure, the courage of Macbeth could not outlive the fall of every other virtue. The habits of the military man, to be sure, remained—he issued orders as a general, and fought expertly, as one long practised in the use of arms; but no longer relying upon himself, as when he confronted the rebel Macdonwald, he continues to cling to illusive predictions, at length "pulls in resolution" even as to them, is seized with remorse, the last expiring glimmer of his original virtue, and dies in despair, on the sword of him whom he had most injured.

But if, in combating Mr. Whateley, our great actor had seemed to carry his respect for Macbeth's courage rather higher than, without controversy, he would have done in his performance of the character, his feelings were correctly true; and from this, his first exhibition of Macbeth in town, to his last, it maintained the same features of discrimination, as I have endeavoured to point out.

At a future time, I shall be called upon to notice particularly the various improvements in the representation of this noble tragedy, derived from the taste and knowledge of Mr. Kemble. I shall then go minutely into his performance of the character, and examine how far he realized the high poetical creation of Shakspeare.

On the 14th of April, Mason's tragedy of Elfrida was acted by royal command. Its principal characters were thus represented. Athelwold, Smith; Edgar, Brereton; Elfrida, Mrs. Siddons. The men should certainly have exchanged parts. However, there might be personal reasons for the arrangement. I can hardly think that Elfrida could have been chosen by the great actress, as calculated to add to her impression upon the public mind. It probably arose out of the private studies of the palace, and was a mere wish to hear the pure sentiment and beautiful versification of this regular drama from the graceful powers of Mrs. Siddons.

At this time, I remember there was an insinuation afloat, that it was an indirect mode of reading a great moral lesson in a quarter, to which the interest of the piece was thought somewhat personally to apply. If so, its dexterity was not the meanest proof that could be given of the very admirable sense of the lady to whom the design has been imputed. On this subject I do not choose to be more explicit.

To revert to the performance of the heroine by Mrs. Sid-

dons, which I saw. It would have done honour to St. Cyr, in the pious days of Madame de Maintenon, but was utterly unsuited to the taste of a mixt audience. Mason, I imagine, derived from Milton his exclusive preference of the classic model, though he professes to study both to amuse and instruct his readers; points, which Milton, according to him, could not condescend to consider, when in Samson Agonistes he wrote with a severe simplicity, which Athens herself would not have demanded. The author of Elfrida, in lamenting the barbarism of our theatre, inclined to think that our love of the irregular drama might admit of a cure, "whenever a poet should rise up amongst us with a genius as elevated and daring as Shakspeare's, and a judgment as sober and chastised as Racine's."

The conduct of this regular drama is the most irregular thing in the world. The Chorus, who are so faithful, that Athelwold, without reserve, communicates before them the most important secret of his life, allow a stranger to them, upon uttering a most elaborate falsehood, to shroud himself in an arbour, whence, from the precious unity of place, he hears and sees every thing, which it was their duty to conceal. Upon Elfrida's proposing to dress up one of those attendants to pass with the king for herself, Athelwold remarks to her, that Lord Ardulph always attends him, who had indeed made to him the first report of her beauty. Upon this Elfrida has a better stratagem to propose; she will "stain her complexion" with "the juice of dusky leaves or berries," as though Ardulph's knowledge could not detect the change of *complexion* as readily even as that of person. And in this not *beautiful* contrivance, her husband acquiesces in his very next speech:

> "Go, do then, as thy tender care directs;"

fearing, however, not that Ardulph may notice the assumed tawny front, but that she may be betrayed by "the liquid lightning of her eyes," or the "wavy ringlets of her hair." But again she comforts him, in spite of Ardulph's penetration, for she now will "stoop her head," and "drawl out an idiot phrase," and assume "a rude and peasant awkwardness." The Chorus is wrapt in admiration at the amazing virtue of Elfrida, who actually provides herself with a nameless azure flower,

> "Which stains the pressing finger, with a juice
> Of dusky, yellow tinct"—

and would have used it, but that her father, the Earl of De-

von, the pilgrim in the arbour, starts from his hiding place, and frustrates the whole stratagem.

The actress, indeed, expressed in the happiest way the unbounded devotion of her love to Athelwold, and exhibited a model of purity and grace to a chorus of stage virgins, which is, as Sir Hugh says, "pretty virginity"—but there was one occasion, afforded by the intelligence of Athelwold's murder by the amorous king, that Mrs. Siddons seized so powerfully, that the sublimest artist never approached her expression. The passage is this :

> "Nay, come not round me, virgins, nor support me.
> I do not swoon, nor weep. I call not heaven
> T' avenge my wretchedness. I do not wish
> This tyrant's hands may wither with cold palsies.
> No, I am very patient."

It will, I should think, be obvious to most readers, that the poet's ear still felt the modulation of Lear's address to Goneril :

> "I pr'ythee, daughter, do not make me mad ;
> I will not trouble thee, my child. Farewell!
> We'll no more meet, no more see one another ;
> Let shame come when it will, I do not call it !
> I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
> Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove!
> Mend when thou can'st, be better at thy leisure ;
> I can be patient."

Upon her father's recommending Elfrida, in her agony, to go in and seek tranquillity, nothing could be more pathetic than the rejoinder of Mrs. Siddons.

> "Tranquillity!
> I know her well ; she is death's pale-eyed sister ;
> She's now in yonder grove, closing the lids
> Of my poor Athelwold."

There was something, too, awfully interesting in the devotion of her widow'd life to cloistered holiness ; and at every suspension of her address to heaven, the iteration of the chorus, "Hear, angels, hear," in the same words, evinced the poet's fine taste and true feeling. Still, however, Elfrida could not be thought to have business sufficient for the stage ; and the nation may be contented to enjoy the drama of its own creation, without looking for the incompatible union, conceived above by Mr. Mason, of Shakspeare with Racine.

I am tempted here to notice, to the credit of the old stage, that on the 28th of April, the Tempest of Shakspeare was

acted at Drury Lane, pure and unmixed. They had not yet embraced the additions of Davenant and Dryden; it will, therefore, be a fit opportunity to take leave of that simple enchanting production. The exquisite beauty of Miss Philips was not more characteristic of Miranda, than her manner of speaking the language. Bensley was the Prospero of the night, and in truth the *only* Prospero. Old Bannister's Caliban contrasted finely with the Ariel of Miss Field. Some prejudice existed against the *masque* introduced by the immortal author, and it was, therefore, here omitted. To prove that it is *beautiful*, and that it can be *done* upon the stage, my friend Reynolds has introduced it in Twelfth Night, where it is greatly attractive, but has no business whatever: besides, that there, having no *magic* for the means, it becomes an interlude *pour passer le temps*, and all imagination is forcibly extinguished.

I take the liberty to remark here upon an *inadvertency* in the conduct of the Tempest, which I do not recollect to have been noticed by any of the critics upon Shakspeare.

When Prospero and Miranda are put on board the rotten carcase of a boat, and exposed to the waves that roared to them, and the winds that did them loving wrong by returning their sighs, Gonzalo provides the duke with many articles that stood him in great stead; among them were *books* which were more precious than his dukedom. In a word, they were the volumes that in his prosperity had wrapt him in secret studies, and on his landing in the island enabled him to command the elements, and the spirits "native and indued to them," to serve his purposes. But we have always difficulty, in the case of these necromancers, to know why he who can do so much cannot do more—why the prescience, that is so alive to the affairs of others, sleeps so profoundly as to their own? Prospero was totally ignorant of his danger, till it involved him in wretchedness; and his magical skill is no use to him, in the exposure to which his daughter and he are subjected. Surely he had nothing to do but seize one of his dark volumes, and provide himself with a royal vessel. Ariel, or, if he was strictly confined to his pine, some spirit of equal power, might have "flamed amazement" to the fleet of his enemies, and compelled them to return him to his dukedom. If every thing is left to preordination, what is magic? If such powers can be given by art, why is there difficulty? The only answer must be that, in his dukedom, Prospero, though *wrapt* in secret studies, was not much *inspired*; and that it was owing to the profound application of his twelve years' residence, that he became the absolute mas-

ter of external nature, commanded the lightnings of Jove, and even the grave to awaken its sleepers, and they obeyed him. He had, therefore, as her schoolmaster, not only made his *daughter* profit beyond other princesses, in studies becoming her youth and sex, but had grown *himself* at length consummate in his art. To be sure, it was upon his *arrival*, that he heard the sorrows of Ariel, in the cloven pine, to which Sycorax had condemned him; and it was by his *art*, that Prospero made the tree gape, and gained a faithful servant by thus setting the spirit at liberty.* The objection cannot be much lessened. Enough.

On the 30th of this month, Mrs. Siddons, for the first time in London, acted the part of Rosalind, in As You Like It. Upon no occasion within memory, was more nonsense uttered than upon this. To hear some people, it might have been inferred, that the very term comedy, implied incessant laughter; and because Mrs. Siddons was delicate, modest, and never forgot that she was both a princess and unfortunate, she must, therefore, fail to give the slightest idea of Rosalind. But it might be worth while to consider at all times, in the performance of this enchanting character, whether its "better parts," as Orlando has it, are not quite thrown down by too decided an enjoyment of male attire, and too brave an exposure of the person of the retiring sex; and that if, under the mannish habit, Rosalind do play the saucy forester, and *talk* somewhat freely, it can never be allowed her to throw away the modesty of her manners, and act, without shame, the indecencies of a wanton. The recollection of many readers will readily supply the instances at which I have just hinted.

Very early, indeed, it was apparent what would be gained by having so fine a speaker in the character. Upon her indicating a disposition to converse with Orlando after the wrestling, nothing could exceed the beauty of

"My pride fell with my fortunes"—

again—

"And overthrown—more than your enemies."

* It is not unamusing to think that Ariel should be threatened with a habitation of harder digestion than the pine:

"If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an *oak*,
And peg thee in his *knotty entrails*, till
Thou hast howl'd away twelve winters."

You groan'd in the soft pine of Sycorax; how will your tender aërial being like the tough and knotty clasping of the oak, condemned therein to a confinement as long as that you first endured, and equal to the time your gentle service to me has lasted: "*twelve* winters?"

But I abstain from such *reproaches* to a different, and, it may be, more popular school; satisfied myself that one of these delicacies conveyed in the suitable tones, and graced by that modest deportment which always attended Mrs. Siddons, was actually worth more to the heart and head of an audience, than whole acts of rude and intemperate merriment. But the million think such matters *dull*. *To* the million, certainly.

The 24th of May this year exhibited a scene of great stage interest—a benefit at Drury Lane Theatre for Mrs. George Anne Bellamy, who had recently excited more than common attention by five volumes of her life, said (for what may *not* be said?) to be written by herself. She tells us therein, that she was born on St. George's day, 1733. Now it is unfortunate to stumble at the very threshold of a life, for this date must be inaccurate; she is put up in the bills for Miss Prue, in Love for Love, at Covent Garden Theatre, on the 27th March 1742, for Bridgewater's benefit, being her first appearance. This, to be sure, might be a failure from juvenile timidity; because we afterwards find Monimia, in the Orphan, to have been called her first performance, on the 22d November, 1744, and then her powers were so overcome by the novelty of her situation, that she could scarcely be endued with sense and motion till the fourth act, when her mind, by a sudden spring, seemed to recover its elasticity, and Quin had to embrace a young heroine of the *genuine stuff*. As the date given for that of her birth would show her at this time to have been only eleven years old, and as I suppose the audiences of *that* age not absolutely childish, I take it for granted that Chetwood was right when he dated her birth in the year 1727, and such an ascription will still leave a sufficient degree of precocity for fools to wonder at.

When Braganza had been performed, and Mrs. Yates had exerted her fine powers to a very crowded house, an address was expected from the brilliant speaker of a former day; but she had lost her faculties in the decline of life so completely, that at the age of fifty-eight she had become an imbecile helpless *old* woman, diminutive in stature, and uninteresting in countenance, and the delightful Farren made the acknowledgments for her benefit.

CHAPTER XI.

Close of the season of 1784–5.—*No production of any consequence.—Brief display of dramatic talent in Sheridan.—His reported new Opera and Comedy.—Affectation as a subject.—Destouches.—Murphy.—As to tragedy, nothing expected or desired.—Jephson characterised.—Our dresses. scenery.—Mr. Kemble's revivals.—Colman the younger.—Turk and No Turk.—Young Bannister.—His talents.—Private excellence.—Kemble as a companion.—Miss E. Kemble.—Mrs. Inchbald's I'll Tell You What.—Colman, senior.—Gibbon.—Author becomes known to Mr. Colman. —Account of his manner.—Miss Younge married to Mr. Pope.—Miss Brunton.*

Such was the close of the season 1784–5. The review here given of it has shown that there was no new production of the slightest consequence. Dramatic talent had made a dazzling, but brief display in Sheridan: the wit that might have divided the palm with Congreve, was forced from its natural seat, and condemned to the benches of the opposition in parliament. Sheridan, indeed, talked occasionally of returning to his dramatic pursuits, and announced that his opera of the Caravan should speedily appear, and rival the Duenna; and that he had a comedy in great forwardness, upon the subject of *affectation*.

But mixed up as he was with the endless struggles of the whig party, with the personal anxiety of placing his oratory upon a level with that of Burke and Fox, Mr. Sheridan could hardly be expected to find time for such a devotion of his powers as was necessary to the production of new dramas not inferior to the past; and in fact, Sheridan might be said to be afraid of the author of the School for Scandal. But that he longer retained the power itself, was, at times, not unreasonably questioned: his mind had taken a decided bent towards politics, and I know not that the muses ever allowed so fierce an invasion of their territory. Such hoarse chidings are apt to frighten the mimic sisters from their haunt, and lead them to prefer a calmer residence, though on a less fertile soil.

What the Caravan, at a happier season, might have been, as an opera, it will not be difficult for those to imagine, who remember the beauty and the sense of his songs in the Duenna. As to the subject of *affectation*, with all its laughable or loathsome singularities, in forming a whole comedy, whose characters are either to be its progeny, or its correctors, I cannot but think it one of the most tempting themes, that ever solicited the comic muse. But, alas! I know of no present writer, to whom it might be securely entrusted. Perhaps if *Destouches* had previously treated the subject in the French mode*, Arthur Murphy once could have made something of it. But he should have learnt to point his prose more for the tongue, that the actor might have had a tune in his dialogue better worth the singing. "There is a tune (says the late Mr. Horne Tooke) in all good prose; and Shakespeare's was a sweet one."† If Murphy be compared in this particular with Cibber, the *Way to Keep Him*, for instance, with the *Careless Husband*, it will appear how nerveless is his dialogue, and how unmeasured and lifeless most of his sentences. The French comedy, in its best specimens, being written in alternate masculine and feminine rhymes, has more care about its composition, and more point in its repartee. After Murphy had translated Tacitus, I know his comic dialogue would have been more like that of Congreve, and Vanburgh, and Cibber—but when Tacitus was finished, the age of invention was past with Murphy. I have heard him talk over the times in which he flourished, and of plays, which he would yet submit to this laggard age, if we had talent sufficient to act them. Alas! in this case, and in Cumberland's, these "jewels of their fathers" have been seen, and some of them tried upon our theatres, but none of them have repaid the trouble of the experiment; and their fate has a little redeemed the character of managers, too often, by an irritated author, deemed insensible to their proper interests.

If such was the state of the modern theatre, as to comedy, it may be still more securely affirmed, that, in tragedy, nothing was now expected nor indeed desired. "The table was full," and any unbidden guest was deemed unqualified and presumptuous. Jephson had in two instances exhibited his power to supply the modern stage with at least musical versification, and a vein of thinking that was elegant and pure, if it was

* I consider his *Glorieux* to be the best specimen of that mode, and indeed a *chef d'œuvre* of structure and composition

† Diversions of Purley, vol. ii. p. 61.

never very impassioned or characteristic. In Ireland, his muse had been powerfully aided by the genius of Kemble, and the nationality of his countrymen had raised him to the summit of his ambition. In England, his Count of Narbonne was deemed inferior to the romance from which it was derived: the supernatural was rather hinted than shown: the author seemed conscious that the stage, at all events, was cold to the wonders of the gothic muse; that the scenic castles could no longer be haunted by the midnight spectre, nor be overclouded by a mysterious and avenging fatality. I will not here examine the propriety of his inference, but I can readily admit that Jephson was not the man to describe the magic circle, and perform the long disused ceremonies of the enchanter. The wand of Prospero had been broken, and beyond all modern sounding his "book had been sunk." If he failed, therefore, in one great spring of tragic emotion—*terror*, he was not gifted in any striking degree with the other—*pity*. He had little pathos, for he was not a natural writer; and it is not by elaborate woe that the heart is ever subdued. The reader of discernment will find the requisites of tragic composition, admirably discussed in the "Elements of Criticism," by Lord Kames, chap. xvi. Upon the whole, the tragedies of Jephson are laboured into great correctness; his dialogue is flowing and energetic, his sentimenss are always pure and just; but his characters have little discrimination, as human beings, and it may be said, that their condition even produces but slight mental difference between them.

In this state of the drama, as to novelty, Mr. Sheridan may be pardoned as a manager, if he did not lend any very favourable ear to the various solicitations for his favour: the pieces he did read may be presumed a fair sample of the commodity, and no human patience could possibly get through the whole. He, therefore, easily became a convert to a favourite opinion of Mr. Kemble. My late friend, like any other great artist, must have been expected to think deeply, as to the exercise of his own peculiar talent: he saw that the elder dramatists alone afforded him sufficient scope, and he was too excellent a critic not to feel the palpable deficiency of the writers for the modern stage. It struck him accordingly that it was a waste of time and money to repeat perpetually these "modern instances" of total or partial failure; and that a grand and permanent attraction might be given to Drury Lane by increasing the power of Shakspeare. This he proposed to effect by a more stately and perfect representation of his plays—to attend to all the details as well as

the grand features, and by the aid of scenery and dress to perfect the dramatic illusion. In Paris, something of this nature had already been attempted; the fine genius and good taste of La Clairon in particular, meditated the manners and the costume of the ancients; and we may credit much of the account which she herself in advanced life gave of this matter, because it is in every essential point confirmed by the cotemporary relations of Marmontel and Voltaire.

Upon the London stage, nearly every thing, as to correctness, was to be done. The ancient kings of England, or Scotland, or Denmark, wore the court dress of our own times; as to shape; and as to colour, the rival monarchs of England and France opposed their persons to each other in scarlet and gold-lace, and white and silver. At the moment I am writing, King John has revived the exact habiliments of the 13th century, and either as to materials or elegance, the dresses of the mimic scene might have been admitted at the ancient court. The old scenery exhibited architecture of no period, and excited little attention. The powers of De Loutherbourg's pencil were devoted to the decoration of some catching novelty of the time—a picturesque forest might aid the enchantments of Arthur and Emeline, and an exact view of Tilbury Fort form a back ground to the sleeping sentinels in the critic; but nothing could be less accurate, or more dirty, than the usual pairs of low flats that were hurried together, to denote the locality of the finest dialogue that human genius ever composed. The error was too universal to admit of a speedy or radical corrective. The vast old stock could not be entirely condemned, and the treasury could seldom bear the expense of any very considerable novelties. The scale of dimension was also too small to admit of magnificent designs. The structure, for it really was one, that latter years saw erected for the play of de Monfort, would have been condemned as unnecessary, or pronounced impracticable by the artists of Garrick's theatre. But the great reform was to take place in those parts of representation, which nothing but propriety can raise above derision or disgust—the whole tribe of mobs, whether civil or military plebeians, and their pasteboard and leathern properties. Whatever credit might be taken by managers, and the newspapers and playbills gave them much, for liberality in their expenditure, the fact is certain, that the expense which attended one of Mr. Kemble's revivals would have defrayed the demands during a whole season of any former management. Such a change in theatrical arrangements he always desired, and through life steadily pursued; until at length he carried

his design into complete effect, during his influence as a proprietor in Covent Garden Theatre. I have ventured this slight anticipation here, because it was at the period of which I am treating, that discerning persons saw Mr. Kemble destined, at no distant time, to be the manager of Drury Lane Theatre. To this object the wishes of his sister, Mrs. Siddons, no doubt powerfully contributed. He now turned his attention to various branches of scenic display, and read with infinite pains every thing that related to his art.

To resume the progress of theatricals.—That ever-delightful little theatre in the Haymarket, continued under the direction of the elder Colman, and exhibited, in the decline of the father's power, the rising talent of the son. The offering of the present season was a musical comedy called *Turk and no Turk*, of which Dr. Arnold composed and compiled the music. The author's prologue, I remember, afforded one of the most outrageous specimens of his tendency to play upon the expression. He feels, he says, the critic's kicking—

> "Not where the foot its usual bounty deals,
> But on his *head*—his head so *out at heels*:"

and he solicits the lash like a sprightly Westminster, as he had been.

> "Whip him like his own gig! he's more your debtor—
> The more you *cut*, you *keep him up* the better."

It may be new to the public to learn that Reynolds, the *dramatist*, was Colman's chum at the boarding-house. What two men have ever excited more scenic laughter?

The younger Bannister, in *Turk and no Turk*, acted the character of Mat Moneo, a solicitor in the Temple, and it reminds me that I have not hitherto noticed the early talent of my old acquaintance. Although he had been a pupil of the great master, Garrick, he yet ripened slowly into positive excellence: the reason seems to be, that his efforts were long misdirected. He had been permitted to study tragedy, for which he wanted dignity, not *feeling*; few men have ever touched the affections more powerfully, in characters upon his level. When he soared higher, an unlucky recollection of his *Apprentice* came across you; and his mode of giving *Whiskerandos* in the Critic sealed his tragedy with the most decided burlesque, and disposed at once of Romeo and Zaphna, and Norval and Hamlet. To burlesque, in truth, his mind was so decidedly inclined, that her daughter Mimicry fastened herself upon him: and like his father, he indulged

himself in imitations on the stage and off. The farce writers of his time, my friend, Prince Hoare *most* successfully, sketched for his powers characters of *whim*, or characters in whimsical situations, which he supported by great agility, and flights of fancy singularly absurd and peculiar to himself. If any writer, as Morton subsequently did, threw into his part a dash of keen uncultivated feeling, Bannister drove it at once to the heart; and, to use the most favourite allusion of Shakspeare's age, the tear and the smile sprung to the eye in company. With these qualities he grew to be the delight of his audiences, whom he never disappointed by caprice or irregularity. Bannister became early wise, and preferred domestic quiet and permanent engagements, to the blaze of notoriety, or the passion for making a rapid fortune by provincial excursions. His union with Miss Harper gave him at once opulence and happiness. He seemed, in addition, to have wedded his patrons, the London public; for his dramatic death alone divided their long and cordial connexion. The good sense and taste of Bannister led Mr. Kemble to a closer intimacy with him than any other member of the profession enjoyed, and much of his convivial time was accordingly passed in the company of the gay commedian. To read most of the articles, to which Mr. Kemble's death gave rise, one would be tempted to imagine that he "had never heard the chimes at midnight," and that his whole life passed away in plodding studies in the library to prepare his elaborate performances on the stage; soothed and sustained by the ascetic indulgence of

"Spare fast, that oft with gods doth diet."

The truth is, that Mr. Kemble was no such person. He loved study, and he loved and enjoyed company. He had, as I used to tell him, a grave Cervantic humour, that led him occasionally into the most diverting scenes of social enjoyment. But although he could and did unbend as much as most men of his time, he yet always retained the fullest title to respect: he had both genius and learning; and, if these qualities required guardians, they might be found in the straight-forward integrity and *general* prudence for which he was always distinguished.

On the 21st of June, 1785, Mr. Kemble's sister, Miss E. Kemble, married Mr. Whitlock, one of the managers of the Chester company. This lady, by her private studies, became a very striking ornament of her distinguished family; and I remember with great pleasure the few opportunities I

have enjoyed of being in her society. Out of her profession, it was difficult to see her and imagine that she could want any thing to render her eminent—however, there could be but *one* Mrs. Siddons. I must think it injudicious in the branches of the Kemble family to crowd as they did to London. It was unlikely that any very strong dissimilarities should exist in their persons: as far as they resembled each other, in the same play they defeated the purposes of exhibition. The strongest contrast should exist in the performers of Shore and Alicia, Hermione and Andromache. The utterance of the sisters was all but identical as to tone and cadence, and pronunciation: as this tended to load the ear with certain sounds long repeated, it could produce nothing but satiety. One voice, if even melody itself, will a little tire upon the hearer through a part of any length: if such another meet you in a second character in the same play, it unavoidably injures the effect of the first. If parts strongly antagonized are uttered in the same key, nature is falsified. Such is the objection as far as the public is concerned in the cast of plays. Managers were, moreover, seldom so blind as to trust their interests entirely to the members of one family. However the feeling of relatives may be moderated by sound judgment, it will always predominate more or less; and it is best not to subject them to solicitations, which, if granted, may be unjust to others, and if refused beget at least a coldness, where the most entire confidence should exist.

The reader will recollect the mention already made of Mrs. Inchbald, her misfortunes and her merits. The elder Colman had taken great pains in the preparation of a comedy from the pen of that lady, to which he gave the title, "I'll tell You what." It was acted twenty nights with the greatest applause, and extended the usual existence of the modern drama. This writer has a striking tendency to the choice of situations perilous to female honour. If virtue be confirmed by the general lesson of her plays, it is well. But should the situations of the drama be dared in real life, because the heroine is extricated on the stage, it will be dangerous to have listened to the encouragement without a security for the protection. Dissuasives from the risk are infinitely preferable to either real or fancied instances of salvation. Gallantries *may* deprave the heart—fathers may sometimes *not* be at hand. Mrs. Euston, in the present play, is a wife, with two children depending upon her for the means of existence, driven by want to the dreadful expedient of affecting to be a prostitute, in the hope, that among the sons of debauchery she may meet with a man of some humanity and generosity.

And such a prodigy of wretchedness is exhibited in *comedy*, mixed up with persons and situations that convulse an audience with laughter! The single word *interest*, which has excited among us so much erroneous sympathy, and taught us to palliate so much actual crime, is to answer for this to reason and to virtue.

The Mogul tale had so conciliated Mr. Colman to the interests of the fair author, that he wrote both prologue and epilogue to her comedy. The manager was indeed fast approaching to the close of his dramatic career. Ten years before this, I infer, from the narrative of Mr. Gibbon, that he was considered rather fallen below the level of his Jealous Wife and Klandestine Marriage. The extract is curious on many accounts; it exhibits an union of wits for the benefit of a brother.

"To Mr. Holroyd.

"January 29th, 1774.

"I am now getting acquainted with authors, managers, &c., good company to know, but not to live with. Yesterday I dined at the British Coffee House, with Garrick, Colman, Goldsmith, Macpherson, John Hume, &c. I am this moment come from Colman's Man of Business. We dined at the Shakspeare, and went in a body to support it. Between friends, though we got a verdict for our client, his cause was but a bad one. It is a very confused miscellany of several plays and tales; sets out brilliantly enough, but as we advance the plot grows thicker, the wit thinner, till the lucky fall of the curtain preserves us from total chaos."

It will be recollected, that this remark proceeded from a critic of the most refined taste, and habituated to the artful exactness of the French comedy. In what is called *structure* neither Colman, nor any of his cotemporaries at all excelled. It was a merit that did not belong to the British school. They wrote occasionally gay and even brilliant scenes; and sometimes *almost* invented a new and delightful character; but they had lost the manly force of the genuine English drama; and watched the French stage with anxiety, as we of the present day still do, in the hope of something which could be lowered or raised into entertainment for a people, styled *the most original thinkers* in Europe.

It was about this time that I became known to Mr. Colman, through the kind introduction of a friend. I was presented to him at his house in Soho Square, No. 28, at present inhabited by a Mr. Hume. Mr. Charles Kemble's house is separated from it, by the paved court on the south side of

the square. He received me very politely, and I was much struck by the exact resemblance of his portrait, by Gainsborough, which hung over the fire place in his sitting-room. His manner was calm, neat and unforced, not at all loud and decisive; but had the temperance and smoothness and dignified ease of one who remembered that he was a gentleman. He talked of Garrick as an actor to a young man, who then thought there was no subject so delightful; and I remember that a new dress for Richard III. being announced to him, we had it brought into the room, and examined the splendid but rather diminutive habitation for the "soul of Richard." How near Colman as an actor approached to our Roscius, I cannot be expected to tell; but he took this dress down with him to the Wynnstay theatricals. The author of the "Biographia Dramatica," says, it was in 1785, that is about the period I am recording, that he gave to the public his translation of "Horace's Art of Poetry," with a commentary. He is mistaken; that work had been published two years before. He was then, as he told me, bringing all his stock of little matters together, with a view to forming about three volumes of light reading for the parlour, and then he believed he had done all that could be fairly expected from him. This he accomplished in less than two years after our conversation.

Miss Younge, the most general actress of her time, this summer gave her hand, as it was expected she would, to Mr. Pope. This union was earnestly opposed by many of her oldest friends. They thought, and justly, that marriage at her age could add but little to her importance. She was at the head of her profession, affluent in her circumstances, and her own mistress; she had a house in Half-moon street, and kept her carriage. Pope, however, it should be remembered, was in the prime of life, possessed of a handsome person, of considerable talent as an actor, and, as I think, greater still as an artist. In either the regular miniature, or small whole-length, with ornamental pencil back-ground, he approached the elegance and taste of the late Mr. Cosway. Mr. Pope, though he has through life, more or less, practised in both his professions, has found them not strictly compatible—the actor did not benefit the artist. It was obvious to the dramatic world that Mr. and Mrs. Pope must carry great influence into any theatre. How Mr. Harris, an admirable manager, looked at it was speedily apparent. Mrs. Pope was not engaged for the winter season that followed her marriage. Holman and Pope he saw were sufficient checks upon each other; he therefore, to keep down any very formidable pre-

tensions from the established heroine, turned himself after some young and beautiful promise in the art, which might strengthen Holman in the heroes of tragedy, and found the object he sought in the person of Miss Brunton. That young lady, at the age of sixteen, for she was born in the year 1769, had astonished and delighted the audiences of Bath by her Grecian Daughter—her Horatia in the Roman Father, and the character of Palmira in the translation of Voltaire's Mahomet. Mr. Harris saw her at Bath, and felt such confidence in her powers, that he resolved to entrust the female interest of tragedy to the early excellence of Miss Brunton.

CHAP. XII.

Season of 1785-6.—*Drury Lane opens with Othello and Desdemona, by Kemble and Siddons.—Miss Brunton in the Roman Father.—Henderson's great effect.—His study.—Mr. Kemble's.—Mrs. Jordan at Drury Lane.—Sketch of her.—How received.—Miss Brunton in Juliet.—Mrs. Siddons in the Jubilee.—Mrs. Jordan Imogen.—Henderson's death.—His Falstaff.—That of some others.—Leonidas Glover.—Frederick Reynolds.—His Tragedy of Werter.—Mrs. Siddons acts Mrs. Lovemore.—Mrs. Clive dies.—Garrick.—Walpole.—Burke's opinion of Garrick.—Cobb's Strangers at Home.—Mrs. Wells.—Topham.—Andrews.—Omai.—Drury Lane.—Sheridan.—Death of Reddish.—Mrs. Jordan in the Trip to Scarborough.—Burgoyne's Heiress.—Mrs. Brown a rival to the Jordan.—Mrs. Abington in Scrub.—Mrs. Ballington's Debut.—Benefit for Henderson's widow.—Murphy's Prologue.—The Distrest Mother.—Racine.—Mr. Fox.—The Captives.—Mrs. Siddons acts Portia on her brother's night, and Elwina in Percy.—Mrs. Jordan in Hippolita.—Miss Kemble married to Mr. Twiss.—Retires from the stage.—Mrs. Siddons in Ophelia, and the Lady in Comus.*

The season of 1785-6 was commenced strongly by both theatres. Mr. Harris had made some brilliant alterations during the recess, which added to the comfort of the audience. Drury Lane showed the sound policy of displaying its greatest talent on the very first night. Othello and Desdemona were finely acted by Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. Although in point of business on the stage, the part of Desdemona did not occupy the large space assigned to the heroines of Otway, and Southerne, and Rowe, yet being written so truly from the heart, the impression made by this accomplished actress was powerful in the extreme. Mr. Kemble was thought to have taken stronger hold than ever in the Moor, and terror was very highly wrought indeed in the awful rumination of the chamber scene. The house seemed unanimously to recognise now, that they had two great tragedians upon the same stage. Without looking away from the page

of Shakspeare, to enquire what might be the native properties of the African, Mr. Kemble's Othello was a high poetical impersonation, and from his first entrance to his last, he wrapped that great and ardent being in a mantle of mysterious solemnity, awfully predictive of his fate.

At Covent Garden, on the 17th October, Miss Brunton made her first appearance in the character of Horatia in Whitehead's Roman Father. Murphy had the kindness to introduce her by a prologue, of which it may be truly said, that not even a hemistic was original, yet it showed the refinement of an experienced writer, and paid a very elegant compliment to Mrs. Siddons.

> "Old Drury's scene the gooddess bade her choose,
> The actress heard and spake—*herself* a MUSE,"

But in turning to his young heroine, he trifles egregiously with the common place simile of the "unfledged bird," and the bird sends him to the passion of the groves for a line of Thomson's, of which only a single word is changed—

> "And shivers every feather with *surprise*" (for *desire*.)

Miss Brunton had a voice of much sweetness, and eyes of great expression. I remember her self-possession in the character, and thought it, though a rather unusual trial part, yet, her powers considered, a judicious selection. But this play opened to Mr. Henderson, in Horatius, one of the most transcendent efforts of genius that the stage has ever given. It is in the second scene of the third act, and the passage is that where Valeria relates the flight of Publius before the three champions of Alba:

> "*Valeria.* What could he do, my lord, when THREE oppos'd him?
> *Horatius.* He might have died! O villain! villain! villain!"

Henderson saw, that if he spoke Whitehead's line as it stood, the patriot passion itself died for want of expressive diction; with the finest tact, therefore, he dropt the heavy translation of Corneille's "Qu'il mourut!" and burst out with the monosyllable "*die!*" uttered with terrific energy. The effect was to transfix the hearer, till a few seconds enabled him to thunder down an applause of the genuine kind, such as is at once felt to be the estimate and the reward of genius. The friends of this great actor, as it will be readily imagined, did not let so favourable an incident escape them. They gave their opinion its full weight with Mr. Harris, who had occasionally, they thought, discovered symptoms of alienation

from this the greatest actor of his theatre. But alas! all their efforts were rendered abortive by an event entirely unlooked for, —the almost sudden death of Mr. Henderson on the 25th of the following month, November. To myself the shock was great indeed; I had expected many advantages from his friendship. There was an authority about his understanding, that determined a younger mind in its course. Prudence was a very marked feature in his own character, and a virtue which he strongly inculcated. Even in his books (and he loved his books), he was by no means solicitous about their condition. The Shandy from which he read in public would have somewhat annoyed those whom Mr. Steevens termed "the admirers of bibliothecal purity;" yet he passed a great portion of his day in his library, was a most diligent reader, and an acute and sagacious critic. Among his amusements entered the frequent transcription of old plays, and the perfecting of many mutilated copies of the original folio Shakspeare. To this labour of love he was in truth much devoted, and he thus found even his relaxation strictly allied to his business. But it was not to carry pedantry into his art, that he was occupied with our early writers. In fact his memory was amazingly tenacious, and he had early made up his mind as to the characters he acted. I believe he varied less from himself than any great actor of his time. Mr. Kemble, on the contrary, seemed to me always to consider the work as still *to do:* he never dismissed a part from his study, as having given to it *all* the consideration he was capable of. To the last of him, Hamlet and Macbeth had still, as he conceived, calls upon him for improvement; and his studies, in the line of the poet of the Macedonian hero, appeared—

"Never ending,—still beginning."

Late in his career, I one morning found Mrs. Kemble going over Zanga with him as carefully as if it had been a new part: he did not rely even upon his recollection, and in the preparation of his effects left nothing whatever to chance.

But I turn from the last triumph of Henderson at the one house, to announce on the following night the first appearance of Mrs. Jordan at Drury Lane Theatre. Her engagement is believed to have resulted from the favourable report of Mr. Smith, who had frequently seen her act with the York Company in the race weeks, which he always attended. Under Tate Wilkinson's management this fascinating woman placed herself in the month of July, 1782. She arrived from

Dublin *with* her mother, brother and sister, and solicited with great humility an engagement at a moderate salary. The charm of her speaking voice, the languor and dejection of her person, excited the attention of the manager, and she spoke for him a few lines of Calista, the Fair Penitent, which let him know something of the highly-gifted woman before him. Her first performance of this character took place on the 11th of the month; the audience received her with astonishment and delight, and to exhibit herself with the full charm of contrast, after dying as Calista, in a few minutes she frolicked on again in a frock and little mob cap, to sing the song of the "Greenwood Laddie," and poured out that liquid melody, that through her life, no ear could ever resist, which rendered accompaniment useless, and science unprofitable, and seemed to furnish a proof, that to some beings the bounty of nature dispenses with the usual steps to excellence, and instinctively supplies what the most painful study can rarely reach and never surpass.

In the York Company she met the usual fate of intrusive merit; her rivals scandalized her in their morning gossip, and annoyed her during the evening's performance. They occupied the wings and the stage doors, and by persevering malignity, laboured to defeat and destroy her. But she was fortunate in a manager whose justice would stretch even a little beyond his interest, and Wilkinson struggled to secure her fair play: but the heroine was sometimes indolent and sometimes refractory, sometimes capricious, and often imprudent; she had arrived at her fourth season, strengthened in her powers, and a favourite of the manager. The permanent and unrivalled distinction of Mrs. Jordan was not at that time her prime characteristic—the Romp, indeed, had been cut down into a farce expressly for her in Ireland, and Priscilla Tomboy she often acted with great effect, but she yet lingered in the train of tragedy, and in the sickly society of sentimental comedy. The Country Girl had not even attracted her attention till she saw the part acted by Mrs. Brown of the same company; she then studied it closely, saw all the opportunities it afforded for the display of her lovely wildness, her laughing vivacity, her rich and abundant humour, and made it her own, beyond all competition. It was from the circumstances just mentioned, that when she had begun to take root in the metropolis, she was reminded of Mrs. Brown, as having shown her the secret of the character, and the rival manager thought it worth while to try whether the reputed mistress could not *laugh* down the pupil. But there seemed no ground to detract from the general ori-

ginality of the Jordan; and the charm of youth secured her from a rival vivacity, which was rather ungenerously obtruded, in a lady past the season in which alone the hoyden can look natural and prove attractive.

Mrs. Jordan appeared the first night in town with no particular éclât: rather as one who came to know whether she had sterling merit, than as a conqueror pursuing her victory in the field, and marching to the capital in triumph. The house was by no means good—little fashion then entered her boxes—even the pit was not full. But she was received with shouts in her great points, and those who attended her debût were unanimous in their reports of the roars of laughter which she excited. For several nights, it was easy to get a seat at any part of the performance. One critic thought her vulgar, another conceived that she might do in Filch in the Beggar's Opera, but denied any great comic requisites.—The actress pursued her course, and by the end of her first season, she had a train of fashionables on her nights, such as had before never assembled their carriages together, but on the performances of the tragic wonder—Mrs. Siddons.

The difficulty of fixing the Country Girl in London may be deemed surprising with our present knowledge of Mrs. Jordan: but she did not repeat the part till the 24th of the month, and acted it a third time on the 28th. On the 11th of the following month, she changed the style of her attraction, and in the character of Viola in Twelfth Night, evinced her tenderness and grace, and the neatness of her figure in the male habit. It is unnecessary to say more of a part, which became so peculiarly her own. The charm of her speaking voice in Viola found the happiest expressions of the great poet, and the harmony of the lines was felt by the most insensible.

At Covent Garden Mr. Holcroft produced his comic opera of the Choleric Fathers, with but slender success. He was a man of considerable talent, but rather hasty in the formation of his plots, and careless as to point in his dialogue, into which he was, perhaps, betrayed by his habit of dictation. It may be assumed as a position quite incontrovertible, that such dialogue as that of Congreve must be written, literally, by the *hand* of its author.

Miss Brunton, on the 14th of November, appeared in Juliet, and exhibited, like every other performer of the character, occasional deficiency. If the actress have the charming simplicity and artless affection of the early scenes, it is nearly impossible that she should possess the tragic vigour and profound art called for as the interest rises. Miss Brun-

ton was too obviously a *declaimer* of passion—the heart was decidedly still. Yet study will always do something, and she seemed a refined and sensible actress.

But I must not omit the revival of the Jubilee at Drury Lane, on the 18th, because Mrs. Siddons actually condescended to be wheeled over the stage as the Tragic Muse, and the attitude of her noble figure reminded the spectator of the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds. As a full and most absurd contrast, the tall insipidity of Mrs. Cuyler figured as the Comic Muse. In this present age of processions, I still prefer the moving drama of the Jubilee. All the characters, it is true, cannot be finely done, but many of the groups will be perfect; and they display, let it be remembered, such strength of interest, and variety of character, as can be paralleled by no other author, and belong to no other stage.

Mrs. Jordan, on the 21st, ventured upon Imogen, but she could act only the *disguise* of the character; with Iachimo, in the temptation of her honour, the mingled astonishment, grief, indignation, reconcilement, and virtuous dignity, were all wanting. Imogen is but a name for the perfect loveliness of the female character; and yet we have heard such absurdity from the poet and the critic, as

"For stronger Shakspeare felt for MAN *alone*."

I hope I have not been inattentive to the excellence of Fletcher; but in very few of his female characters will a steady comparison lie with those of Shakspeare; they have more of prettiness than passion. Fletcher is always a poet, but his heroines seem to have their origin in romance rather than nature, and some of his females disgrace the sex by the looseness of their conversation.

On the 25th of November, I am to record the death of Mr. Henderson, who, after a seeming recovery from a fever, died of some spasmodic action upon the brain, utterly unapprehended by his medical attendants. He had not completed the 39th year of his age, and yet had long been a perfect master in his art, the range of which he carried to an extent, that seems hopeless to succeeding actors. "I will not," said Mr. Kemble once to me, "speak of Henderson's Falstaff; every body can say how rich and voluptuous it was: but I will say, that his Shylock was the greatest effort that I ever witnessed on the stage." I remember it in its principal scenes, and I have no doubt whatever, that it fully merited so high a praise; but I respectfully insinuate, that Macklin in the trial scene was superior to him and all men. Yet it may be proper here

to say, that in many of his characters, Henderson's superiority may be disputed; but that his performance of Falstaff is as much above all competition, as the character itself transcends all that was ever thought comic in man. The cause of this pre-eminence was purely mental—he *understood* it better in its diversity of powers—his imagination was congenial; the images seemed coined in the brain of the actor; they sparkled in his eye, before the tongue supplied them with language. I saw him act the character in the second part of Henry IV. where it is more metaphysical, and consequently less powerful. He could not supply the want of active dilemmas, such as exhilarate the Falstaff of the first part, but it was equally perfect in conception and execution. I have already described his Falstaff at Windsor, which completed this astonishing creation of the poet. I have born with many invasions on this peculiar domain of Henderson. It has in truth been an ungracious task to most of his successors; they seem all to have doubted their right of possession; to have considered themselves tenants only upon sufferance; and thus it was with King, and Palmer, and Stephen Kemble, and Ryder, and a whole tedious chapter of fat knights, who have roared and chuckled, at the slighest possible expense of thought; and, laughing much themselves, in their turns, perhaps "set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too. Peace to all such!" It was the strong sense of Henderson's excellence in Falstaff, that made me miserable whenever Mr. Kemble announced his intention of assuming the character. He was not naturally a comedian, nor a man of wit. He might have given a fine reading of the text, but the soul of the knight would have been wanting. A Falstaff only endured out of respect for the actor's other merits, is at any period of life, prejudicial to his fame. He could afford to leave the stage without aiming at the praise of universality, and I sincerely rejoice that he did so.

Henderson had died in good circumstances, and it was determined to bury him in the Abbey. Every respect that could be paid to a good man and an excellent artist, was paid on this occasion; his remains were followed to the grave by his nearest friends; and his brother actors, from both theatres, saw the final honour bestowed, (perhaps the greatest he ever received) the placing him between Dr. Johnson and David Garrick. For many years I occasionally enjoyed the sad luxury of musing over his grave, and in my memory reviving the splendid triumphs of his genius. But though he war always presented to my fancy surrounded by a group of characters the creation of Shakspeare; yet at no great distances

were strongly seen the whole family of Shandy, and the mingled sorrows and enjoyments of the Sentimental Journey. I write, with suitable indignation, that now MONEY must be paid for the privilege of approaching his grave, and the Commons of Great Britain doubt whether they have the power to drive the money changers out of the Temple!

On the same day that Mr. Henderson died immaturely at thirty-nine, Leonidas Glover dropt into the grave at the age of seventy-four. His Epic Poem rather disappointed the world. The critic showed it to be replete with poetic excellence, and the patriot bosom glowed at the very name of Leonidas; yet it faded away as deficient in its interest, and too narrow in its plan. What has been said tauntingly of the French, may be more liberally and not less justly put: *Les modernes n'ont pas la tête epique.* Mr. Glover wrote three tragedies, two of which were upon the subject of Medea and Jason; the other had for its heroine Boadicea. Mrs. Yates was fond of Glover's cold declamation, and frequently displayed herself in the character of Medea. Glover, like Mason, loved and preferred the classic model, and would not see the incompatibility of the Greek chorus with the modern stage. His widow resided in a state of blindness under the same roof with the late Noel Desenfans, Esq. who attended to her infirmities with a friendly assiduity, that was never intermitted for a single day. She was related to the Wellesley family.

The 25th of November had yet another occurrence memorable in stage history. I mean the first appearance of Frederick Reynolds as a dramatic writer. He was then but in his twentieth year, and on that day presented to the Bath audience a *tragedy*, upon the subject of Werter. From Westminster School, he had passed into his father's office, and his father was the celebrated attorney of that name, so conspicuous in the times of Wilkes and liberty. His son, probably from some of the operations of politics to the prejudice of his family, has, through life, discovered the most decided abhorrence of all faction, and happily for himself, arrived at the wise conclusion, that petty evils might be endured, provided domestic security and national strength flowed from the steady operations of government.

In a rather serious indisposition, he had been ordered to Bath by his physician, and in his small portmanteau had found room for his tragedy of Werter, which he composed in his nineteenth year. He placed himself on his arrival in one of the boarding-houses of that city, and sent his play to Mr. Dimond, the manager of the Bath Theatre. Several days elapsed, and he heard nothing whatever of his tragedy. It

was rather a new thing to act a play, which had not previously been sanctioned by the London audience, and he began to conclude that his offering would be treated with contempt, when one of the guests of his boarding-house, at table, excited his attention by saying, that he had been that morning amusing himself at the theatre, and had among other things been shown two very beautiful scenes, which were in preparation for the new tragedy of Werter, coming out there. Reynolds gaily offered a bet that his communicative friend was mistaken, and for once at a bet heartily hoped he might lose his money. He was speedily set at rest upon the grand point, by a summons, from the manager himself, to attend a rehearsal of his play—and soon was initiated into the morning mysteries of the boards, so astonishing to a young author, and so ridiculous to an old one. The tragedy was brought out with the best aids of the Bath management. The hero was acted by the manager, Dimond; the heroine by a Mrs. Bernard, a very interesting woman and judicious actress. The *dramatist* had the invaluable delight of seeing his effects, for the first time, in the tears of an audience piled up to the roof. The tragedy not only succeeded at Bath, but became popular through the country. Mr. Kemble himself, in the summer, acted the character of Werter, but always cut out the readings from Ossian, which the young author considered to be little short of treason to his interest.

Meyler, a bookseller, well known, wrote his prologue and epilogue, and whether displaying the author's tact or his own, introduced all the great theatric names, to which the Bath judges had affixed the stamp of excellence; Siddons and Brunton, and Edwin, and alas! Henderson. The author attended the company and his play, on the removal to Bristol: of fame, he certainly got as much as he could possibly have expected: of money, though much needed at the time, he got not a sixpence. The theatre even expected him to pay the two guinea fee to the licenser, whose sanction was necessary, the play not having previously been acted; this Reynolds properly refused. His play, however, made him known in the world, and procured him the usual introductions to the fashionables, who take credit in their parties for showing off any new feature of public amusement, Reynolds then, and since, I believe, estimated this tribute at its full value.

Variety is to the theatre absolutely indispensable. The range of characters performed by Mrs. Siddons in tragedy, was rather circumscribed; but it was not owing to the powers of the actress, but to the want of power in the authors. To write an inferior part for Mrs. Siddons was, as to

herself, nothing ; but it was destructive to the author. The public might forgive the modern bard, who was inferior to Shakspeare, and Otway, and Rowe; but the admirers of Mrs. Siddons never pardoned the writer whose rash ambition had employed her talents on ineffective matter: she had seldom by a modern been written up to at all, and in the eloquent language of Steevens, "her lips were sacred to the task of animating the purest strains of dramatic poetry."

Still Belvidera and Shore, and Isabella and Mrs. Beverley, could not be eternally represented; besides, it was thought that Mrs. Siddons, powerful as she was, could not be kept for ever on the stretch; but that some parts of a milder character should be mingled with the heroines of tragedy. On the 26th, therefore, of November, she acted for the first time Mrs. Lovemore, in Murphy's Way to keep Him. After many years observation of this great woman, I profess, I do not recollect a character which, in her manner she more perfectly identifies than this of Mrs. Lovemore. But it never charmed, because its effects could be but moderate. The audience had been used to see every eye in tears, and to tremble at the hysteric agony excited by her tragic power. They now beheld the mighty enchantress brought down to common and domestic life, learning a lesson instead of ruling the affections, and occupying a drawing-room with genteel deportment and calm good sense. To show Mrs. Siddons little, if at all, superior to other women, was to dispel something of her charm; to lower her value: I thought it injudicious; besides, the enchanting Widow Belmore kills *that* and every other part in the play. She repeated it three times, and then retired from the boards for some considerable interval, during which opera and the Jordan made a rather successful stand.

On the 5th of December, the celebrated comedian Mrs. Clive, died at Teddington, and was buried at Twickenham. She had lived for many years in great harmony with her refined neighbour Horace Walpole, who, though himself one of the most sensitive and fastidious of beings, delighted in the whim, the mimicry, and broad humour of Mrs. Clive. When *virtu* offered no pressing temptation, and even romance solicited him in vain, he had one unfailing resource—he could always "touch a card with the Clive."

It was well known that this celebrated woman delighted in annoying Garrick, and in all probability Walpole rather spoke *her* feeling of Garrick than his own, when he called him "a dull creature and an impertinent jackanapes." I know, in truth, nobody who has treated him worse, except,

indeed, the *rancorous* UNKNOWN, who wrote the letters of Junius. He addresses him in the elegancies peculiar to politics and criticism: "Now mark me, vagabond! keep to your pantomimes." But let me rescue the great master of the stage from this vulgar trash, and show how Burke thought and wrote of him: "I remember a conversation I once had with my ever dear friend Garrick, who was the first of actors, because he was the most acute observer of nature I ever knew; but I am again falling into my usual vanity, in valuing myself on the eminent men, whose society I once enjoyed." —*Works*, v. p. 34.

The management of Mr. Garrick was not calculated to conciliate the authors of the modern drama. What is there really excellent, which he had refused? Prudential considerations would lead him to reject all those flimsy pieces, which, living, even by the aid of cordials, but their nine nights, gave the profits of three of them to the author. How was he assailed by the ruffian Kenrick, who having had the address to get a royal command on the *third* night of his play, modestly insisted upon the profits, not of his own attraction, but the king's!

On the 8th, Mr. Cobb produced at Drury Lane Theatre his comic opera called the Strangers at Home. The incident on which the plot turns, however simple, is one capable of the greatest interest. Certain Florentines, returning from slavery, keep on their African dresses, to try the real dispositions of their mistresses and friends. Mr. Cobb did not greatly exceed the ingenuity of the Italian comic opera. But it is easy to perceive, that he might have worked such a subject into satirical exposure of the richest humour, and diversified his scenes with the most refined, or the rudest feeling. The music was by Linley, and much admired. During the confinement of Mrs. Siddons, the opera was extremely serviceable to the theatre.

Mrs. Warren, a daughter of Powell, was received at Covent Garden Theatre on the 10th, in the character of Elwina, in the tragedy of Percy, with that generous indulgence which the merit of her father necessarily secured to her. She subsequently rather strengthend than weakened her claims by some lady-like performances in comedy.

Mrs. Wells, too, crept out in the character of Shore; an experiment which her critical friends were so blind as to permit. As far as mimicry could carry her, she unquestionably went; and she always reminded the hearer of Mrs. Siddons or Mrs. Crawford. What her admirers termed simplicity, in humbler efforts, hung about her utterance in

tragedy, and rendered it drawling and mawkish. Topham's farce of the Fool followed it; he had made some alterations which were not improvements; and, notwithstanding the omnipotence of the daily press, failed in establishing his claim to be considered as a dramatic writer. He sometimes succeeded in the ludicrous of epilogue, but was generally careless, gross in his allusions, and very incorrect; he dressed his composition for the most part as he did himself, in the trick of singularity. The absurdities in fashion, for many years, were sketched in these lively compositions by him and Miles Peter Andrews; and it was thought essential to solicit their aid as the established masters of the ceremonies. Their efforts should occasionally be compared with those of Garrick and Colman, that writers may learn to be pleasant without vulgarity, and avoid the burlesque of both humour and character.

For the demands of Christmas, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre prepared with superior spirit, and what was more surprising, with superior taste. He brought out on the 20th, a pantomime exhibition, called Omai, which, by the aid of painting and music, presented to the people a living history of the discoveries of their immortal countryman, captain Cook. The success of this elegant entertainment seems to have stamped a character upon the theatre itself, which has since constantly adhered to it. The manager, fully alive to the interests he had excited, secured systematically, the materials of his triumph. Artists of great merit were engaged in his painting-room; and he constantly kept together a set of pantomime actors, the best in the profession, and facilitating the labours of stage preparation, by the habit of always working together. His machinery was well served, his processions were arranged with skill. In the contest with Drury Lane Theatre, Mr. Harris had this great advantage, his attention was directed exclusively to his management; and as that vested in him absolutely for his life, he had no check upon him from partners in the concern, and could always command the necessary funds to carry his designs, however expensive, into effect. The great difficulty at the other house, was to get Mr. Sheridan to determine what should be done. When that was settled, the machine got with difficulty into complete action; there were always pecuniary embarrassments, and unwilling tradesmen. With his force in tragedy, comedy, and opera, he ought literally to have shut up the other theatre. He never made even a drawn battle of it. In this respect, his play-house resembled his party. Opposition had all the splendid talent upon its

benches, but it was beaten in the contest, and Pitt alone triumphed over Fox, and Burke, and Sheridan, and Windham. It was easy to perceive that the politician interfered with the comic writer and the manager: and the usual advice was tendered to him upon the occasion, to make his election between these houses of national representation. But he adhered to the one from an honourable ambition, and to the other for the means of existence. He was commonly deemed an indolent man; but, whatever he did for the theatre, (and its concerns were always submitted to him,) the part taken by so constant a speaker in the multifarious business of the senate was quite sufficient to fill and exhaust a mind of great application.

The last day of the year calls upon the historian of the stage, to record the death of Samuel Reddish, a distinguished actor in the days of Garrick. This unfortunate gentleman died in the Lunatic Hospital at York. It may be agreeable to the reader to learn here, that his first appearance at Drury Lane was on the 18th September, 1767, in the character of Lord Townley, and that Mrs. Abington on that night performed the part of Lady Townley for the first time.

The *indolence* of Sheridan, it should be remembered, had in 1777, besides writing the School for Scandal, given to the theatre a very agreeable alteration from Vanbrugh's Relapse, called A Trip to Scarborough. To this production, the sprightly pen of Garrick contributed one of his neatest prologues, entrusted to the best of all comic speakers, King. I shall be excused for quoting two of his pleasantries.

> "No head of old, too high in feather'd state,
> Hinder'd the fair to pass the lowest gate;
> A church to enter now, they must be bent,
> If even they should try th' experiment."*

The *reason* of the alteration of the comedy is thus expressed:

> "As change thus circulates throughout the nation,
> Some plays may justly call for alteration;
> At least to draw some slender covering o'er
> That graceless wit, which was too bare before;"

* Thus whimsically applying the sublimity of Shakspeare. See Cymbeline, Act III. scene 3.

> "This gate
> Instructs you how to adore the heavens; and bows you
> To morning's holy office."

I know nothing pleasanter in this species of composition than such a use of Pope's allusion—

"And Van wants *grace*, who never wanted wit."

This comedy, on the 9th of January 1786, afforded another charming *Hoyden* to the genius of Mrs. Jordan. Thus calmly sitting in my study to retrace the fading impressions of her powers, I seem again to hear the magic of her laugh, and once more enjoy the sparkling expression of her countenance. Let none of the young and inexperienced doubt the record of these gifts, as though age resorted to fancy for charms, that memory never fairly supplied. That must be transcendent, which imagination could not have pictured, if it had not actually been seen.

The fourteenth was proudly distinguished by the production of the Heiress, written by that accomplished man, General Burgoyne. It had been the work of a couple of summers, passed with his friend, Lord Derby, at Knowsley; and a purer or more interesting comedy cannot be found. It does not, to be sure, like the School for Scandal, lay claim to the whole empire of wit, but it never wants it where necessary, nor a better talent at all times; I mean the fine preservation of actual character. One might have expected that what so stern a critic as Horne Tooke sincerely admired,* would have been hailed with rapture by the lovers of the regular drama. But, on the contrary, his characters were censured, as not completely original, by which could only be meant that they were not monsters; and it was an article of serious charge against him, that, when he says of Miss Alton, "for when she was formed, nature broke the mould," the confessions of Rosseau proved a capital larceny, in the expressions *Si la nature a bien ou mal fait de briser le moule dans lequel elle m'a jeté, &c.* To such flimsy or envious trash, Burgoyne was so humble as to write an answer, and, as he has left nothing else of a critical nature, that I recollect, I have a pleasure in showing how well he understood the philosophy of his art.

"*In point of originality of characters*—It is humbly hoped this comedy is not without it. But, present instances apart, it is submitted to the judicious, whether such an exaction of novelty as would make a resemblance to any thing ever seen

* "See the Heiress (one little morsel of false moral excepted), the most perfect and meritorious comedy, without exception, of any on our stage." *Diversions of Purley*, vol. i. p. 369.

upon the stage before, unacceptable, might "not materially vitiate the public taste; carry the major part of writers beyond the scope of nature and probability: and deprive the spectator of that pleasing and infinite diversity of shape and colouring that the leading passions, vices, and follies of civilized life admit. Love, avarice, misanthropy, &c. &c. if drawn a thousand and a thousand times with new shades, and in different points of view, will do as much credit to invention, and have as just an effect in exhibition, as if Moliere or Congreve had never touched the subjects. It is not whether there may not be personages in the Heiress, in whom we may discover family features, that is asked, but whether they are not still individuals, with whom we have been hitherto unacquainted; a question not for the author to determine.

"*Original thought.*—It has been observed, that there is an image in a speech of Lord Gayville, copied closely from Rousseau. Very possibly it may be so. The author of the Heiress certainly has read that elegant writer; and to show how easily invention may be deceived, he will quote another writer, (in his estimation, still more elegant) who thus accounts and apologizes for unconscious plagiarism. "Faded ideas," says Mr. Sheridan, "float in the fancy like half forgotten dreams; and imagination, in its fullest enjoyments, becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted."

How this admirable comedy was acted, I have already observed, as to its principal features, Sir Clement Flint, and Lady Emily. Miss Farren seemed to have absolutely identified herself with this elegant model of fashionable excellence; and when she really in private life, assumed the dignity of her present rank, the elevation was deemed neither abrupt, nor surprising, but rather as if Lady Emily Gayville had obtained the superior title of Countess of Derby.

On the 23d, Mr. Harris, alarmed at the growing popularity of the Jordan, availed himself of the old report as to Mrs. Brown's being the real romp of the York company, and brought that lady out to check the presumption of her reputed scholar.

She acted Miss Prue in Love for Love, and was seen with considerable pleasure, as an actress who had claims to figure, face, and voice; and was entirely devoid of that trick, by which the provincial performer supplies the want of genius in the art. A party was soon formed to espouse this lady's pretensions, but the struggle could not be long. As to the public,—

> "Cold approbation gave the ling'ring bays,
> For those who durst not censure, scarce could praise."

Jordan became, in theatricals, a new and enthusiastic delight; and her rival soon retired from the contest, to which, could even her youth have returned again, she would certainly have been unequal.

The two Romps next selected Lucy in the Virgin Unmasked, for a test of their merits; and Mr. Brown, the husband of the new actress, in the absence of Edwin, made a respectable stand in Coupee. I may be pardoned for not remembering much of this extravagant pleasantry by Henry Fielding. For a writer of his exquisite knowledge of human nature, his dramatic failure is a problem exceedingly difficult to solve.

The recovery of Mrs. Siddons, after her confinement, was announced to the public by a royal command. Their Majesties ordered the comedy of the Way to keep Him: and the great actress performed Mrs. Lovemore on the 6th of February. I have already expressed my opinion fully upon the policy of such performances; and, certainly, never myself saw her without that pleasure which so intellectual a being could not fail to inspire: in Mrs. Lovemore, too, there was leisure to admire her beauty. The youth of the present day are acquainted with her dignity and power, and know the general style of her features; but they may believe me when I assure them that Mrs. Siddons was to the full as lovely, as they have ever seen her terrible.

It has by no means been agreeable to me to register so many rash attempts upon the tragic muse, and poor Mrs. Wells has paid the penalty of unsuccessful ambition. On the 7th, she made a more favourable impression in the mixed character of Rosalind; but the whine that was always felt, robbed it of the requisite smartness, and though bearable, the performance was far from good.

Why am I obliged to sully the fame of Abington by commemorating the utter and gross absurdity, which led her to attempt the character of Scrub for her benefit? The metamorphosis of her person, the loss of one sex, without approaching the other; the coarse, but vain attempt to vulgarize her voice, which some of my readers remember to have been thin, sharp, and high toned, all this ventured, and producing nothing but disgust, I hope rendered the large receipt from the treasury itself less palatable than it had ever been upon any former occasion. Lady Racket atoned for it to the sex and to her friends.

Mrs. Billington, under the declared patronage of the Queen, came from Dublin, to assume here the first line in opera, and on the 13th, acted at Covent Garden Theatre, Rosetta in

Love in a Village. She at once took her station as the first and best of all stage-singers in my time; and exhibited so much science, and taste, and flexibility, and feeling, that she was heard with delight in most of the airs, and astonishment in others. The pure and flowing melodies of Arne, acquired new graces from her execution. The majestic movement "In love should you meet a fond pair," produced an effect which literally, haunted the ear, and made every singer try at least the immeasurable distance between them. There was about this lady, too, the steady composure which always attends great talent. She presented herself well to the audience; her self-possession sustained her through the protracted exertion of vocal power, accompanied by but little action. In addition to all this, she was a lovely woman, and graceful in every thing she did. Not many years ago, I saw again Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture of her: it was a work every way worthy of that great master, and expressed much of the character, which, by means so inferior, I have here endeavoured to delineate. For her second part, she took Polly, in the Beggar's Opera, and in music of a simpler character, showed that she was mistress of every style, and knew exactly, (that rare knowledge in a singer,) the true limits of embellishment. Her mother, Mrs. Weichsel, was a celebrated singer of a very different cast, and I think resembled her daughter only in a voluble and brilliant execution. The family could boast another great professor in the admirable leader Mr. John Weichsel, whose vigour and precision, power, and taste, were so long the *soul*, I may say, of the opera band. Compared with other great leaders, I think I should attribute to him more *spirit*, without the flight that is usually found to accompany that quality, where it exists in any remarkable degree.

Mrs. Billington was as liberal as she was excellent; and I yet remember a conversation one night at the Hanover Square Rooms, in which she expressed her opinion of Madame Mara, in terms which raised both those accomplished singers in my esteem.

Mr. Kemble, it will have been observed for some time back, was scarcely ever called on at the theatre. The Garrick school, as they were styled, had possession of management, leading characters, the press, and no slender portion of the public. He had to endure all this silently, under the conviction that his claims were only deferred, and that time would, ere long, without a struggle, give him all he wanted. He amused himself at this time by bringing out his farce upon a Spanish plot called the Projects, formerly acted at York, and now reconsidered, shortened, and improved. It was thought

ingenious in its contrivances, but the humour was either not sufficiently broad for farce, or faintly acted, perhaps both; it was coldly received by the house, and as coldly withdrawn by the author. The fact is, that he had no great confidence in his powers as a writer, and either avoided the press altogether in his dramatic compositions, or was indifferent, or sometimes repentant after publication.

The death of Henderson had left a deep impression upon the theatrical world. Mrs. Siddons, in particular, regretted in that great actor, the prophet who had first proclaimed her merits and announced the future triumphs of her skill. As soon as it could be proposed, she therefore tendered her services to Mrs. Henderson, for whose benefit a night was arranged at Covent Garden Theatre, which with reference to the day in November on which her husband died, was fixed for the 25th of February. The play was Venice Preserved, Belvidera by Mrs. Siddons; and the farce Three Weeks after Marriage, Lady Racket by Mrs. Abington. The whole of the pit, on this occasion, was let at box prices, and a handsome sum was thus added to the provision, which Henderson's prudence had made for his widow and only child.

On this affecting occasion, Arthur Murphy wrote a prologue, which, somewhat curtailed, was spoken by Mrs. Siddons. There were a few points beautifully expressed—

> "And for his relatives, to help his store,
> An audience gave, when HE could give no more."

The tribute to his social worth was thus neatly paid:

> "Expiring virtue leaves a void in life."

With reference to the loss of his talents in the profession, there is always something ungracious towards the living in these extreme lamentations for the dead—

> "Who now like him shall animate the stage?"

There is a kind of cruelty in forcing people to admit their own inferiority—that "they are mere *shadows* to fill up the muster-book"—crows and daws to flutter in the dramatic hemisphere, when "the eagles are gone by." In the long list of characters, who "lost half their souls" when he expired, I will not be so unjust as to say that more than one has totally died with him.

> "Falstaff, who shook this house with mirthful roar,
> Is now no counterfeit: he'll rise no more!"

The misty common-place of the muse attending the bed of sickness, and vainly trying to chase disease,—then, in wild despair, joining the mournful throng in the procession, and leading the way through the dim vaulted aisles of a poetic, rather than Westminster Abbey, all this the "vanity of art" was in sober truth nothing to the purpose, and to be cut out.

How impertinent such an attendant really is on such an occasion, the surer taste of Sheridan rendered strikingly apparent. Hear how tenderly and truly he notices the interment of Garrick in the very same spot.

> "The general voice, the meed of mournful verse,
> The splendid sorrows, that adorn'd his hearse,
> The throng that mourn'd as their dead favourite pass'd,
> The grac'd respect that claim'd him to the last,
> While Shakspeare's image from its hallow'd base,
> Seem'd to prescribe the grave, and point the place."

The last allusion was fortunate beyond rivalry; equally appropriate on the present occasion, it had been used too recently for Murphy to repeat it, though the very greatest plagiarist among the dramatic writers of England. The office that Sheridan assigned the muse, when Sculpture should have raised a monument to her Garrick, was to hang over his bier—

> "And with soft sighs disperse the irreverend dust,
> Which time may strew upon his sacred bust."

When Garrick called upon the genius of Roubiliac to execute for him a figure of Shakspeare, the call of genius was obeyed, and a bold and masterly work was accomplished. As to the monument erected to Garrick in the Abbey,

> "Treason has done its worst."

It is a most graceless relief, and should be superseded by something of a more dignified character.

Mrs. Siddons took for her benefit, on the 4th of March, the Distrest Mother of Ambrose Phillips, and leaving Andromache, the part more strictly suited to her noble figure and maternal look, she assumed the stormy passion of Hermione, and fluctuated between love and rage with admirable skill. It will hardly be credited how little the English poet has varied from Racine's Andromaque, yet he seemed to claim the honour of a tragic writer for a mere version, everywhere inferior to the force and harmony of his original. The great

defect of this tragedy is in the arrangement of its scenes in colloquies of two speakers, perpetually interchanged, and reversing the effect previously produced. Here this defect was inherent in the subject itself, and I know no artifice by which it could have been palliated. The mention of Racine reminds me, that my friend Kemble greatly preferred Corneille to the Euripides of France; a preference in which I most certainly never could concur. Upon the publication of Mr. Fox's historical work, I was delighted to find my fondness for Racine sanctioned by the taste of that great and amiable man: he even meditated an edition of that poet, which would in course have been accompanied by illustrations of his genius, the more valuable, as the commentator, in his own character, seemed to belong to a bolder and more original school.

Modern tragedy was again destined to disgrace on the 14th of March. Dr. Delap's Captives was endured for three nights, and then, like the spirit of Ossian, which pervaded it, was gathered to its fathers. The only thing noticeable in the tragedy was, that Kemble appeared in the genuine Scottish dress, but had no other actor on the stage to keep him in countenance. These solitary flashes of propriety denoted the zeal of the great actor for the truth of exhibition; a time was soon to arrive, when he could carry his wishes beyond himself, and produce a tragedy on the stage, through the whole of whose characters, illustrious, or mean, one correct presiding mind should be clearly discerned. At present his power in the treatre was rather inconsiderable, for when on the 6th of April, he put up the Merchant of Venice for his benefit, his sister Mrs. Siddons acted Portia: Shylock was performed (funerals, too, are *performed*) by the manager, Tom King, and Kemble himself *walked* in the gentlemanly habiliments of Bassanio. But it was compensation rich, and rich enough, to be on the stage, and hear from the lips of Mrs. Siddons the triumphant delirium of joy when Bassanio has chosen the right casket.

> "*Por.* How all the other passions fleet to air,
> As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embrac'd despair,
> And shud'dring fear, and green-ey'd jealousy.
> O love, be moderate, allay thy extacy,
> In measure rain thy joy, scant this excess;
> I feel too much thy blessing, make it less,
> For fear I surfeit.

I have stept forward to connect two performances of Mr. Kemble together, and therefore return to announce the removal of Werter to town for the spring season, Mr. Holman and Miss Brunton acting the hero and heroine with great

success. The manager, who was to be so closely and lastingly connected with the author, then gave him nothing for his tragedy; but when he subsequently added Eloisa (not Abelard's Eloisa, but la nouvelle Heloise) to the list of tragic dramas, then thought himself bound to allow him one night for his benefit—it produced my old friend the striking sum of EIGHT GUINEAS.

It should not be omitted that Mrs. Siddons, in the anxiety after new characters, had stooped to Elwina, in Percy, and something, no doubt, was the result of such accomplishments in the part; but who can get rid of first impressions? The title of this play invariably revives before my eyes the sparkling gaiety of Lewis, his flowing hair in powder, tied by a blue set of streamers; his light summer costume, of no age in the history of man, and all the inimitable flights of tragic passion, which forty years cannot entirely wear down in the memory.

For Mrs. Jordan the search after novelty proved more favourable: *She would and She would not*, offered Hippolita to her talents, and it long continued a very powerful attraction. The other characters in this comedy were admirably cast. King was the Trappanti; Parsons the Don Manuel; and Miss Pope the Rosara.

On the 1st of May, Miss Kemble was married to Mr. Twiss, a highly respected friend of her brother's, and retired from the stage. She had struggled with many discouragements in the profession; but all the admiration, all the zeal, and critical talent of George Steevens failed to impress the public with his own opinion of her powers. At one time it had been expected that his attentions to this accomplished and excellent lady might terminate in their union; but the commentator was doomed to a life of cheerless celibacy. The social character of that critic would no doubt have been vastly benefitted by such an union. Shakspeare might have lost some of that illustration, which Steevens seemed to live only to supply.

Mrs. Pope enacted Zenobia, for her husband's benefit; and Mr. Harris, who never seriously could think of being without such an actress, engaged her the following season.

On the 15th May, Mrs. Siddons took her second benefit, and acted the character of Ophelia, in Hamlet; followed by that of the lady in Comus. I remember my anxiety led me early to the doors of the theatre that evening, and her effect in the sweet Ophelia is very distinctly impressed upon me now. There is something in the composition of great genius,

which is never suited to common organs. The language of Shakspeare must be felt to be spoken. It is not here true, that

"Give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music."

Nothing but absolute strong sense and passion in the performer, with the accompanying person and grace, can hope to do him justice in any thing. Ophelia had usually been consigned to the mere vocalist, who could, in addition to the snatches of old tunes, whine out the coherent and incoherent ravings of her lunacy, and not utterly in her manners discredit the declared partiality of the Prince of Denmark. But we had not been accustomed to see such a part sustained, even on a benefit night, by the great actress of the time.

For a *difference* between the Siddons and other actresses of Ophelia, take, first, the affectionate intelligence with which she listened to the counsel of Laertes, touching

"Prince Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour."

No countenance but her own could have conveyed all that was expressed in the narrative to her father of Hamlet's sudden appearance in her closet; or of the exquisitely simple reply afterwards, when he disclaimed all love for her—

"I was the more deceiv'd."

But it was in the scene of Ophelia's distraction, that this great woman threw out one of those transient flashes of design so observable among the insane, conveyed with a look of the utmost subtlety, suddenly assumed, and immediately lost. The passage was this:—

"*Oph.*—I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think, they should lay him i' the cold ground.
"My BROTHER *shall know of it*—"

And then she wandered into thanks for counsel, orders for her coach, and her leave of the sweet ladies, to whom she fancied herself a visitor.

The line which I have printed by itself, as delivered by Mrs. Siddons, was never to be forgotten.

The lady in Comus, perhaps for the first time, spoke the magnificent phrases of Milton as verses of such amazing power demanded to be given: but the piece is essentially undramatic, and Mrs. Siddons, though an admirable declaimer,

required passion for the display of her genius. Yet the grandeur of innocence, and the energy of virtuous indignation, became absolutely terrific in the famous address to Comus, v. 792—9:

> " Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc'd;
> Yet should I try, the uncontrolled worth
> Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
> To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
> That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,
> And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
> Till all thy magic structures rear'd so high,
> Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head."

Although I cannot think Comus fitted to a public stage, and that noisy unreflecting thing a mixed audience; yet among the decorous retinue of a great baron, acted by the juvenile talent of his family, on some occasional festivity, I can conceive no display so graceful or instructive; and to the present hour, the Masque of Comus has more ennobled the ruins of Ludlow Castle, than the recorded honours of all the lords presidents of Wales, who there held for ages their solemn and splendid courts of the marches.

CHAP. XIII.

Haymarket.—Mr. Colman attacked in the newspaper.—His Prologue.—Mrs. Baddely dies.—Female Macbeath and Falstaff.—Mrs. Brooks.—Disbanded Officer.—Mrs. Jordan at Edinburgh.—Her verses.—Winter season of 1786-7.—*Rival Richard Cœur de Lion.—Ryder at Covent Garden.—Death of princess Amelia shuts the Theatres.—Presentiments of Death.—West Digges dies.—Dodsley's Cleone.—Lady of Fashion.—Anecdote.—Mrs. Cowley.—Pilon.—Miss Prue.—Reynolds's Eloisa.—Mrs. Siddons in Imogen.—Mr. Kemble's Posthumus.—Its excellence.—R. P. Knight.—Such things are.—Roxalana.—Death of Brereton.—Count of Narbonne.—Seduction.—Lady Restless.—Jephson's Julia.—Mr. Kelly.—His Powers.—Mrs. Crouch.—Society at her house.—Mrs. Yates dies.—Mrs. Siddons in Alicia.—Poor Hewerdine.—Professor Porson.—His memory.—Original Anecdote.*

The Haymarket Theatre opened on the 9th of June, with a prologue, written by Mr. Colman, delivered by Mr. Bensley. It seemed to have no other object than to repel a malignant insinuation in the Public Advertiser, that his mind and body had been smitten together. He therefore announced that he was "alive in very spite of his physician." There was an unfortunate reference in it to Le-sage's Archbishop, in the following tuneless couplet:

> "Till apoplex'd at last, his congregation
> Smelt apoplexy in each dull oration."

His allusion to Foote, however, though labouring in its expression, faintly vindicated his claim as a writer of pointed verse.

> "Fam'd Pasquin, his applauded predecessor,
> 'Gainst wit and humour, never a transgressor,
> Still cheer'd your vacant hour with jest and whim;
> When hapless Chance depriv'd him of a limb;
> But you, who long enjoy'd the tree's full shade,
> Cherish'd the *pollard*, and were well repaid."

The reader will, perhaps, recollect the amateur performance of Dr. Stratford's Lord Russel, at Drury Lane, in 1784. The actors seem to have been deeply inoculated, and the disorder kept *coming out* occasionally in different places. But I did not attend the performance of Mr. Lawrence in Philaster, with Mrs. Jordan; and I shall pass over Mr. Horne this summer, in Hastings, at the little theatre. Shore was followed by a new farce from the pen of the ingenious Mrs. Inchbald, called the *Widow's Vow*.

On the 1st of July, that beautiful, but unthinking woman, Mrs. Baddeley, died at Edinburgh. Her errors were too gross for even the stage to palliate; and they led her through profusion to embarrassment, and it was believed to hasten her death at last, by taking laudanum. Some general notion of her countenance and figure may be derived from Zoffani's picture of King and others in the Clandestine Marriage. The adorable Fanny is Mrs. Baddeley; the Canton, at a *proper* distance, is her husband. For the chance of doing a little good, I press the fate of this "*inspired idiot*" upon the reflection of one lady on the modern stage; and satisfy myself with leaving the caution thus enigmatical. The little manager allowed his theatre to be disgraced this season, by two of those vile and beastly transformations, which indelicacy seldom parallels. A lady (Mrs. Edwards) absolutely made her *first appearance* on any stage, in the dissolute highwayman, Macheath; and Mrs. Webb exhibited *herself* in the dress of Falstaff, and sustained the character, word for word, through the first part of Henry IV.

After a record of such grossness, it is pleasing to notice the appearance of Mrs. Brooks, in Lady Townley. Her countenance was beautiful, and its expression refined; her person elegant, and distinguished for its graceful ease. But the voice was thin and weak; could that have been strengthened much by art and practice, the stage had then almost acquired a representative of Miss Farren.

The 24th of July presented an importation from the German theatre, to which we have since been so alarmingly accustomed. A Mr. James Johnstone gave it an English dress from the German original of Lessing. Something could not but be effected by the talent of Miss Farren, Mrs. Bulkeley, and Mrs. Inchbald, of the one sex; and such performers as Palmer, John Bannister, Parsons, Wewitzer, and Baddeley, of the other. The *Disbanded Officer* lived for nine nights.

As London did not offer much attraction this summer, I shall be excused for noticing the benefit of Mrs. Jordan at Edinburgh, on the 6th of August. After acting Letitia Hardy

in the Belle's Stratagem, she spoke an address, written, as it seems, by herself, and pleasant enough to do her credit.

> "Tis true, such *planets* sparkled here,
> As made me tremble to appear;
> A twinkling star, just come in sight,
> Which tow'rds the *pole* might give no light."

But as she proceeded, I think there appeared some mark of personal displeasure toward the queen of tragedy. The reader of the following lines may gather, and surmise.

> "*Melpomene* had made such work,
> Reigning despotic like the *Turk*,
> I fear'd *Thalia* had no chance,
> Her laughing standard to advance;
> But yet her youngest ensign, I,
> Took courage, was resolved to try,
> And stand the hazard of the *die*."

As I think I am quite certain of the *tone* in which she delivered this allusion, so I can have no doubt of the effect of it. An irruption had been made into the very capital of the solemn empire, and the monarchy, which had been absolute, was now limited, if not divided. The Jordan rather too evidently enjoyed her triumph.

The winter season of 1786-7 opened on the 16th and 18th of September, and nothing remarkable occurred, at either house, until both theatres produced their rival versions of M. Sedaine's Richard Cœur de Lion, which had been set by M. Gretry, in a manner so beautiful, expressive, and impassioned, as to beget a question, whether, after all the disparagement of French opera, our neighbours had not come nearer than their rivals, in rendering music, as an imitative art, a faithful interpreter of nature.

It had excited a perfect delirium of loyalty in Paris, when brought out in 1784. An observer of the surface only, would have pronounced the revolution of 1789, an impossibility. Richard, like Henri Quatre, is one of those dramas, in which the affection of the people for a virtuous prince, finds ailment in every scene. Mac Nally's at Covent Garden, produced no effect at all. General Burgoyne's taste and skill rendered the after-piece at Drury Lane a permanent property for the theatre. By throwing the interest of Blondel into the character of Matilda, the translator made a provision for the gratification of the ladies, which the original author had neglected; or imagined too strong a deviation from Millot's narrative of Richard's captivity. Though no singer, Mr.

Kemble did contrive to reply to Matilda's strain, and the spectators enjoyed the sight of his noble figure, pacing his melancholy exercise within the walls of his prison. The whole piece was carefully and perfectly acted. The happiest exertion of vocal power was unquestionably with Mrs. Bland; a singer of so much sweetness, taste, and truth, however confined as to her range, or peculiar as to her style, that I hold her, in music, to be like Lafontaine in fable, unique, and unapproachable.

Mr. Harris had not been insensible to the loss of Henderson. He had engaged Mr. Ryder, from Dublin, to take, at least, a *part* of the business sustained by that universal actor. Mr. Ryder was an able, but a hard, an accurate, but a coarse performer. He could act Iago, Falstaff, and Sir John Brute; and perhaps these three points comprehended all that he could fairly bring within the reach of his powers. When the immense circle of his predecessor is contemplated, old enough for Lear, young enough for Hamlet, mellow enough for Falstaff, tart enough for Benedick, the jovial Comus, the deadly Iago, the Sir Charles Easy, or the Sir John Brute, the Roman Father, or the Malvolio; a manager must have been happy in Mr. Ryder's assistance to fill so great a chasm. His Sir John Brute seemed to have altogether forgotten his *title;* with that single exception, I know of no fault that could be found in it. Mr. Ryder had studied his profession, and was a master of it, according to his standard of power.

The death of her Royal Highness the Princess Amelia, which happened on the 31st of October, closed the theatres from the 1st to the 13th of November. There was no particular excitement, more than that of a splendid funeral, attendant upon the death of a royal maiden of 75, who had lived in retirement either at Gunnersbury, or in the house which is now Watson Taylor's in Cavendish Square. At that advanced age, Walpole wrote verses in her praise, and she replied to him in prose neatly and unaffectedly. She left the bulk of her property to her German nephews, the Princes of Hesse, after some very considerable legacies to the ladies upon her establishment.

If the genius of history, in the pages of Tacitus, turned aside occasionally to notice a prodigy or a presentiment, I shall be forgiven, while the theatre remains closed, for mentioning one foreboding which attended the Princess Amelia. She uniformly expressed her belief, that the month of October would be fatal to her. Her father, George the Second, died on the 25th of that month, and her brother, the great Duke of Cumberland, on the 31st. Her Royal Highness also

died on the last day of the month. Such a man as Sir Kenelm Digby would have turned his mind loose among the sympathies of collateral beings, and thought such coincidences natural, perhaps necessary. The scepticism of the modern philosopher leads him solely to consider how far such prepossessions, solemnly entertained, may enfeeble the frame, and thus contribute to their own fulfilment. His present Majesty, then Prince of Wales, frequently graced the festivities of Gunnersbury. The Princess played her pool of commerce to the last, and delighted in the happiness of youth, which she wanted neither temper nor skill to promote.

While the theatre thus missed its usual supporters, it, on the 10th of November, lost one of its striking ornaments by the death of West Digges. I view him "but rather like a dream than an assurance that my remembrance warrants" as sturdy as Cooke, but more pathetic, steady, and refined. If I do not deceive myself, his Caratach in Fletcher's Bonduca was to be mentioned among the unexpected felicities of performance, where the actor seems identical with the character, and impresses for ever upon it his own peculiar manner, as the only mode by which it can be justly conveyed.

Dodsley's tragedy of Cleone was revived on the 22d of the month for Mrs. Siddons. I did not see it on either of the two nights performance. The subject had in his youth been selected by Pope; and he had composed a tragedy, after his fashion, at the time, which in his riper years he fortunately destroyed. In the year 1758, Dodsley, by his friend Garrick, turned over to Covent Garden, brought out his Cleone with the most unequalled success. Miss Bellamy is stated in the heroine to have rivalled the sorrows of Mrs. Cibber. When the principal incident is understood to be the agonized ravings of a mother over her murdered child, and that mother was to be performed by Mrs. Siddons, the only question must be whether the distress were not too intense for endurance? I should think this must have been the case; for Dodsley certainly has written his play with great feeling, and close enough in its expression to the genuine language of the passions. An anecdote was many years ago current, that a lady of fashion once asked Mrs. Siddons in what way she judged, as to a new character, whether it were worthy of her pains? The great actress replied, that "if upon reading it the part appeared to be written *in nature*, she never doubted that something might be made of it." A surer test than this could not be selected, nor one better calculated to confine her studies to the writers of former times.

Mrs. Cowley, on the 25th, produced a comedy called

"The School for Greybeards," which was in great danger on the first night, but, after a revision, which engaged the fair author ten days, was again acted, and took its run agreeably enough, though never attaining the usual popularity of her muse. There seemed to have been an apprehension, that in looking to Mrs. Behn for some of the incidents of her play, a few of the impurities of that writer had left a tinge upon her dialogue. Both ladies express equal astonishment at the *free* imputation.

At the other house, on the 18th, Mr. Pilon met with the most complete success in his comedy called "He would be a Soldier," which started under the decided dislike of so accurate a critic as Mr. Colman. The interest was none of the newest:—a father embarking for India leaves his infant son to the care of an inkeeper, with instructions to make him pass for his own: the result of course is, that his own booby progeny is really passed off upon the long absent gentleman, on his return to his native land. The disclosure of the deceit puts an end to the comedy. Pilon had a readiness of talent, but this was the only play he finished. He was one of the large class, who, feeling in themselves the indications of mental power, disdain the fetters of any regular profession, and determine to instruct or amuse the world by their wisdom or their wit. He attempted the stage as an actor, and failed; as an author he may be said to have been successful—but his success yielded no steady provision for the day that was passing over him, and he was besides improvident, convivial, and careless. He lived a life of embarrassment, and died within a year, after his union with an amiable woman and the arrangement of his affairs began to brighten the prospect before him.

He would be a Soldier was deeply indebted to the actors for its success. Mrs. Pope had returned and played his heroine; Lewis, Quick, Edwin and Aickin zealously supported their respective parts, and the piece was the greatest attraction of Covent Garden during the season.

December 11, Mrs. Jordan added Miss Prue to her list of sprightly characters; but the Country Girl, through life, continued the prime attraction of the actress. Nothing but the force of first impressions will account for other cases of this sort; but the Country Girl, as a full piece, certainly contained most of what Mrs. Jordan was born to do. In afterpieces the Nell seemed to me transcendant.

On the 20th, Reynolds gave his second tragedy, Eloisa, to which I have before alluded; and on the third night had the memorable benefit, which would have deterred any mind but

his own from dramatic composition. But he had a perseverance that nothing could discourage, and, though writing always with great labour, doggedly wrote on, until he became one of the greatest acquisitions to the modern stage.

The benefits of Mrs. Siddons usually presented some interesting novelty to the public; her first night, the 29th of January, 1787, she acted Imogen, in the really *romantic* drama of Cymbeline. A taste which I will neither censure nor examine on the present occasion, calls upon females, who assume the male habit, for a more complete display of the figure, than suits the decorum of a delicate mind. Mrs. Siddons assumed as little of the man as possible; so that her most powerful scenes were those in the dress of her sex. I have said what was wanting in the Imogen of Mrs. Jordan. In Mrs. Siddons it was all to be seen in the utmost perfection. Her scene with Iachimo, I am satisfied, was never approached. The variety of her manner and expression was quite astonishing: the reluctant reception of the imputations as to her lord's fidelity, the detection of the villany, the s orn of her virtuous indignation, and the dignity with which she called upon Pisanio to relieve her from the wretch who had too long "abused her credulous ears," were triumphs even for Mrs. Siddons. I freely admit, that in the scenes of disguise, a form less majestic, while it indicated more fragility, bespoke more sympathy; and that a figure nearer to that of a boy, would, by increasing the visible probability, have heightened her effect with her brothers in the cave. But I have balanced fairly the *pour et contre* and preserve a very lively sense of so exquisite a performance. Mr. Kemble was, by a thousand degrees, the best Posthumus of my time. It was a learned, judicious, and in the fine burst upon Iachimo at the close, a most powerful effort; and such it continued through his theatric life. Among the many excellencies of my departed friend, one, which strongly impresses me at the present moment, was that admirable skill which kept the utmost vehemence from the remotest appearance of rant. His voice, though not what could be considered powerful, was exquisitely modulated through its whole compass; it was never for a moment harsh or out of scale: and this may beget a reasonable surprise at the general applause which has attended *certain* efforts in this difficult art; where the most discordant noises have at times rendered the ear doubtful, whether such sounds could proceed from a human organ. A most enlightened philosopher and acute critic, whom we have recently lost, has an observation on this

point so admirable, that I shall beg permission to strengthen myself by his authority.

"The mere sensual gratification (says R. P. Knight) arising from the melody of an actor's voice, is a very small part indeed of the pleasure which we receive from the representation of a fine drama: but, nevertheless, if a single note of the voice be absolutely cracked and out of tone, so as to offend and disgust the ear, it will completely destroy the effect of the most skilful acting, and render all the sublimity and pathos of the finest tragedy ludicrous." (*Principles of Taste*, p. 93.)

On the 10th February, Mrs. Inchbald's comedy, called *Such Things are*, established itself as a stock play at Covent Garden Theatre. All the improbabilities of its interest, I mean the European and Christian Sultan and his wife, were allowed under the passport of benevolence, and philanthropy had one more triumph on the stage. This rage of sentiment ended in the massacres of the French revolution in two short years.

15th. I just, in passing, notice the Roxalana of Mrs. Jordan. It certainly fell under the comparative skill of Mrs. Abington; still it was entertaining nonsense.

On the 17th instant, died Mr. William Brereton, at the early age of thirty-seven. He had been for some time under confinement at Hoxton. This gentleman had been considered rather serviceable than great, and his tragedy was commonly deemed weak and insipid. But occasion calling upon him to act Jaffier to the Belvidera of Mrs. Siddons, he seemed to have derived a new soul from the collision. The performance was full of tenderness and energy. It was said, that in kindling his imagination the divinity unsettled his reason; but that in clasping the goddess in his embraces, he became too sensible of the charms of the woman. Madness is commonly preceded by some flight of irregular fancy. Perhaps there was a slight foundation for the superstructure, which inventive gossip ran up in haste at the time. The world (I mean more than the dramatic world) knows, that it was the widow of this gentleman who became, in her second nuptials, the wife of Mr. Kemble; and whose high praise, in the language of her husband, I shall lay before the reader on a very interesting occasion.

On the 8th of March, the Count of Narbonne was revived at Drury Lane for Mrs. Siddons, or rather for Captain Jephson, from whose pen a new tragedy called Julia, was shortly expected. This is the common policy of the theatre, and is, therefore, like many other things of custom, presumed

to be right from its long continuance. Yet there are strong grounds for doubting its wisdom. The mind of at least modern writers, or rather the manner of composition, is so limited, that such a prelude to novelty is more likely to injure the new piece by palpable sameness, or perhaps inferiority, than to benefit by familiarizing the judge to the author's style of thought, expression, or structure. For the performance, Mr. Kemble was all that the author himself thought him in the Count. In the Countess, notwithstanding the immense superiority of countenance, I have sometimes doubted whether the Countess of Miss Younge, from its querulous dejection, its passive gentleness, and intense horror, did not approach nearer to the conception of Jephson.

The author of the Count of Narbonne always seemed to me to have looked too low for a model. He has numerous imitations of Home. The last the strongest.

> "A little while
> Was I a wife! A mother not so long!" &c.
> DOUGLASS, Act V.

> "I was a wife; there gasping lies my husband;
> A mother too; there breathless lies my child."
> COUNT OF NARBONNE, Act V.

On the occasion of its revival at Drury Lane, the author published a second edition of his play, corrected, which his friend Mr. Malone saw through the press. It may be proper to add, that Austin was finely acted by Bensley, and that Theodore and Adelaide were sustained by the younger Bannister and Mrs. Crouch.

On the 12th, Mr. Holcroft gave to the Drury Lane Company the attraction of a regular comedy called *Seduction*. He took credit in an execrable prologue for preserving the unities; and, indeed, from the nature of his subject he was not tempted to many changes of place. The object was, to show the higher orders how criminal that indifference became which opened their doors to the systematic seducer. Mr. Kemble, of all men, acted a Lord Morden, too fashionable for care about any thing; Palmer, Sir Frederick Fashion (the seducer); and Miss Farren, the brilliante of the comedy, Lady Morden.

Mrs. Siddons was again drawn into comedy for her brother's benefit. He was all his life extremely careless about such matters, and often indeed put up a weak play, when it was in his power to have selected a strong one. Murphy s *All in the Wrong*, on this occasion, exhibited one of the most delibe-

rative, dignified, and impressive women in the world, as Lady Restless. But the impression left by the character was of little value: those who saw it thought, *again*, that the great actress was here a "star disorb'd." I point out these trips in former management as cautions against forcing genius to labour against nature. With the feeling of great power and practice, performers are often led to think, that every thing is possible to their efforts, and that they are excluded from any particular walk by prejudice or timidity. The inimitable Hogarth thus dreamt that the painter of *Marriage a-la-Mode* could display the sorrows of Sigismunda; but he had *history* neither in his forms nor the treatment of them; and his work was barely endured, out of veneration for the talent displayed on other occasions.

On the 14th of April, Jephson's much expected tragedy of Julia was received by a very brilliant audience with suitable applause. It is now completely forgotten, except for the astonishing effect made by Mr. Kemble in Mentevole, a part very truly calculated for his powers. The dark designing subtlety of the Italian, combining with ungovernable passion, produces scenes of deep interest and prodigious force. The language of the poet excited, I remember, a vast deal of false criticism; it was considered by some to be too figurative. But, in conveying the effects of any passion to a cultivated mind, all those artifices which awaken *associations* are allowed to the genuine poet. Mr. Gray, too, met, unfortunately, with a critic of the creeping class in his friend West, who seemed to think that, in using the *painting* expressions of a poetical age, he was writing a play of no distinct time: but there is a mighty difference between a powerful diction, and one that is obsolete. Perhaps in strictness, all that is really essential in dramatic expression never drops into disuse. What a fine rebuke it is to this levelling sort of criticism, to read that Gray conceived himself called on to justify the following admirable resemblances to Shakspeare, in the fragment of his play on the story of Agrippina. "Is he not the *silken* son of *dalliance?*"

> "Things that but whisper'd
> Have *arch'd the hearer's brow*, and *riveted*
> *His eyes in fearful ecstacy.*"

The associations which spring in the hearer's mind from such picturesque expressions as these, give the most refined delight that poetry can offer to our intellect. Whoever would weaken them is unacquainted with the great resources of the

art; he may "*appelle un chat, un* CHAT," but Shakspeare and poetry call the animal, "the green-ey'd monster," the type of jealousy.

The 20th of this month introduced to an English audience Michael Kelly, in the character of Lionel, in the opera of Lionel and Clarissa. I owe it to an intimacy of more than thirty years to say something beyond a common notice of a very kind and friendly man, and a very able and scientific singer. It often happens in music, that the sweetest organ leads to nothing brilliant, and that truth of tone and flexibility, and compass, achieve perfection in the art. Something like this was true of Kelly. His voice had amazing power and steadiness; his compass was extraordinary. In vigorous passages he never cheated the ear with the feeble wailings of falsetto, but sprung upon the ascending fifth with a sustaining energy, that often electrified an audience. Some of my readers will remember an instance of this in the air, sung *only* by himself, "Spirit of my sainted Sire," where the fifth was upon the syllable *saint*. Had he remained only what Michael Arne left him, he might have sung the English ballad as well as other men have given it, and stopt short of becoming really an artist in music; but the Conservatore at Naples, in which he passed five years of his youth, gave him all that science could add to an original love for the art; and Apprili, the best master of any age, completed the studies of the young musician. He was soon versed in all the intricacies of the Italian conversation pieces and finales, and acquired the reputation upon the continent, of being an excellent tenor. There that intimacy with the Storaces was formed, which ultimately made so great an impression in London, when Stephen Storace, a rough honesty, but a man of fine genius, composed for his sister, as the Buffa of almost all Italian operas, and Kelly as the hero, music which gave a new feature to our amusements. The foreign habits of these accomplished singers enabled them to sing steadily, while moving about the stage, (a difficulty of no mean rank,) and infused a life, a bustle into our opera, which before hardly trusted itself with action, but only—

"Address'd itself to motion, like as it would sing."

It is not my intention to gratify the appetite for scandal, by any account of the intimacy which Kelly formed with that beautiful woman, Mrs. Crouch. Her husband was the only man who did not seem to value her charms, and I can speak from knowledge, that he was upon the most friendly terms

always with Kelly. Mrs. Crouch benefitted greatly by his instructions. Their house soon became, after the play, the resort of many of the patrons of the theatre, and its proprietors. The hospitality was of the gayest kind. Something, in course, was taken by all who sat down, but temperance presided at the board, and the wit, that sparkled like the wine, flowed in just measure, and with good taste. The actress herself sometimes sat at table in the splendid decorations she had worn at the theatre, and so continued an enchantress till she retired to her room from the party. This, perhaps, had something in it of foreign taste; but it was infinitely agreeable. There I have met with those, who indeed gladdened life; and enjoyed the perfection of music, not imposed as a task, but sung from the gratification it afforded the singers, as well as that it gave to the delighted hearers. The reader may add, to this unaffected treat, the occasional surprise of Sheridan, arriving from a late debate, and evincing that he had a fertility of imagination which was absolutely inexhaustible. He may expect to find Mr. Kemble, too, in such a party; and there he, in truth, frequently was. Points of management were often settled in five minutes, at such a *rencontre* with Sheridan, that he could not be brought to decide by all the morning solicitations of the parties, who besieged his dwelling house. It is true, that what are called the *little hours* stole away imperceptibly in such society; but for this, the guest never had to apologize to either reason, decorum, or good taste.

On the 3d of May died Mrs. Yates who had been the most graceful actress of her time. The death of Mrs. Cibber in 1766, left her without a rival. I have, I think, noticed the enchanting music of her declamation and the elegance of her form. Her Andromache, and the monody upon Garrick's death, are what chiefly adhere to my memory. Mrs. Yates, more than any actress, or woman that I have ever seen, reminded you of classic times. The style of her features was not modern, and she courted a likeness to the statues of antiquity, in the solemn composure of her attitudes. She was the Poussin of the stage.

Davies tells a story of her starting into great notice, by acting Mandane, in the Orphan of China, during Mrs. Cibber's indisposition; and how she deceived Garrick, at rehearsal, when nearly perfect in the character, by affected ignorance: how, then, Murphy fell keenly to the work of tuition, and in a week or ten days, did such wonders, that Garrick saw her success to be probable. The story is inconceivably foolish. Mrs. Yates was not in a condition then, to play tricks

with her manager. Nobody at rehearsal affects ignorance who really has knowledge. If she possessed the power of the part, why delay, and ten days drudgery with Murphy, to be parrotted into his meaning? The truth is, that prejudice in the manager, produces timidity in the actress. Accident alone, excites the evidence of talent. When Mrs. Siddons, in Lady Anne, trembled at Garrick's Richard, I am quite sure that she did not think herself a great actress.

Had Henderson lived, there was a probability that Mrs. Yates would have joined him, and contributed her declamatory aid to the attraction of his readings. They would, no doubt, have recited select scenes from our best dramatic authors. This arrangement, it is likely, occurred to him upon seeing, in May 1785, how admirably she performed the Duchess of Braganza, for the benefit of the once celebrated Mrs. Bellamy. It would have been impossible to strike out a nobler diversification of Henderson's various talent, than Mrs. Yates could have supplied. The alternations of form, countenance and sex, would have had great value in the exhibition. Old Sheridan, reading after Henderson, was like that unfortunate animal called a dinner-bell, in a certain assembly; a heavy proser, whom nothing but the phlegm of a Dutchman can possibly endure; yet he must be endured, till the great performer has had time for refreshment.

Mrs. Siddons, on the 7th of the month, changed her character in Rowe's very interesting tragedy, Jane Shore. There were critics then, and there always will be, idle enough to justify a mere experiment, and decide against the most obvious propriety. So here, because the terrors of Mrs. Siddons were indeed great, they asserted, that it would be wise in her to assume the disgusting ingratitude, and the senseless explosions of Alicia, and resign the noble generosity of Shore as to her great betrayer's offspring, and all the gentle sufferings, which in her matchless expression, produced the most salutary woe, that ever dimmed the eyes of intelligence and beauty; I saw her Alicia, it has passed away like a turbid dream, leaving a pain upon the recollection, not sufficiently defined for expression. But her Shore remains there in all the lonely loveliness of its virtuous poverty; an image superior to the pencil of the artist, and which she alone could excite in the imagination.*

* I shall not scruple to intrude a grammatical remark of some importance, into a record of dramatic excellence. Let the spectator recall here the effect of one short word, in the line uttered by expiring Shore to her husband—

"Forgive me!—BUT forgive me!"

and let them then meditate on the absurdity of defining such a word, an articulate sound having no meaning in itself.

As the opinion upon the comparative value of the two characters need not be left entirely to my own credit with the reader, I apprehend it will not be very difficult for him to pronounce the following exclamation of Jane Shore, before Glo'ster, superior in value to all the "frantic hair," and "waving floods of bluish fire" that sound like meaning in the mouth of Alicia.

> "*J. Shore.* O, that my tongue had every grace of speech
> Great and commanding as the breath of kings;
> That I had art and eloquence divine,
> To pay my duty to my master's ashes,
> And plead till death, the cause of innocence."

Kelly has been already noticed on his appearance in Lionel. He had, what I at least thought, a better opportunity in Young Meadows, soon after, of displaying his science and musical expression. The graceful melody of Arne, "O how shall I in language weak," proved Kelly's feeling and taste to be greatly beyond all existing competition. The Rosetta of Mrs. Crouch was, at that time, inferior only to the Rosetta of Mrs. Billington; whose voice, be it observed, was not equally rich, nor her shake equally true: but I have already dilated upon her accomplished and perfect style. She was the greatest of all English singers.

On the 14th of May, one of those irregular humourists, who are the *fiddles* of male societies, and are allowed to exceed all ordinary decorum, for the pleasantry expected, William Hewerdine, acted, for a benefit, Young Philpot in the Citizen, at Covent Garden Theatre; but it was a *misnomer;* all his convivial spirit died away before the large and unaccustomed party, and he was to the last degree flat and unprofitable.

> "Where be your gibes now, your jests, your songs? Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table in a roar? Not one now!"

I have heard poor Hewerdine firing away from his sawcy cock-boat, upon that first rate, Porson; and laughed at the opposition of the *modern* to the *ancient* GREEK. Learning had an irreparable loss in the one, and conviviality in the other. The duller sons of either fashion or business may easily avoid their errors; but up to a certain point, human nature could not be more instructive than Porson, nor entertaining than Hewerdine.

This incidental mention of Porson reminds me of a curious circumstance, as to his prodigious memory. I was dining

with him at the house of a mutual friend, when, over wine, a very dull man became outrageous in the praise of Pope's Eloisa to Abelard. The professor began upon the poem, and recited it, with some occasional accompaniments, of imitations by two moderns, in Ovidian Latin; and, as a perpetual or running commentary, he repeated the Macaronic version, called Eloisa in dishabille, which has stolen into print, and been attributed to Porson, as he assured me, erroneously. Our wise friend lost all forbearance at this outrage. "He would not endure such a profanation of the work of an exalted genius. He would have satisfaction for the buffoon travesty of his favourite poem." The man's head was wrong: but, taking him aside, I did at last hit upon an argument, that charmed away his anger. I asked him, "how he could think it possible for the professor to undervalue the poem? and what proof HE could give of his own veneration for it, equivalent to the committing it so accurately to memory, together with three rival versions of such different complexions?" Goodman Dull then really laughed away his folly, and returned to table quite reconciled to his master.

CHAPTER XIV.

Summer of 1787.—*The Royalty Theatre.*—*The question stated.*—*Palmer before the Magistrates.*—*Whimsical conduct.*—*Colman's novelties.*—*Inkle and Yarico.*—*The Village Lawyer.*—*Winter Season of* 1787-8.—*Kemble alters the Pilgrim.*—*Dryden's Spleen.*—*Mrs. Jordan.*—*Marriage of Mr. Kemble to Mr. Brereton's widow.*—*Excellence of that choice.*—*Bannister.*—*Mrs. Inchbald again.*—*King and no King.*—*King Lear by Mr. Kemble.*—*Fate of Sparta.*—*Criticism.*—*Mrs. Cowley and Mr. Merry.*—*Smith's last benefit.*—*Greathead's Regent.*—*Mrs. Piozzi's happy Epilogue.*—*Grimaldi.*—*Lady Wallace.*—*The Ton.*—*Mrs. Abington.*—*Beatrice.*—*Animal magnetism.*—*Singular anecdote.*—*Palmer returns from the East.*—*Mrs. Jordan in Sir Harry Wildair.*—*Mrs. Siddons in Cleopatra.*—*Palmer amusing in Falstaff.*—*Leoni, Master Braham.*—*Mr. Smith's Farewell.*—*Garrick's more Judicious.*—*Old Sheridan.*—*Colman's Ways and Means.*—*Mr. Kemble's father acts in London.*—*The School for Scandal in the Hay-Market.*

The summer of 1787 witnessed an attempt of the elder Palmer to give to the inhabitants of the eastern part of the metropolis that essential luxury, a theatre. The appearance of Garrick among us in that quarter of the town had left a sort of dramatic longing, which was at length too powerful to be resisted, and, under the approbation of the Lord Lieutenant Governor of the Tower, the first stone of the building was laid on the 26th of December, 1785. The theatre stood very near Well-close Square; and the usual accompaniments of a play-house, taverns and public-houses, crowded soon about the site of expected gaiety and profit.

They who think that the play-house, under proper restrictions, may, from the associations it suggests, become not only an amusement but a lesson, saw a degree of oppression in refusing such a school of morals to that great division of the metropolis, or taxing it with such a personal toil or heavy coach-fare as must be inflicted upon the visitors of the patent theatres.

In examining the matter of a contest, it saves a world of time if we set aside the false pretences of the parties. Pal-

mer thought that the Royalty Theatre, situated in the district of a palace and fortress of the crown, might bid defiance to the monopolizers of the west. He tried to lull the apprehensions of the winter managers by what seemed a summer theatre; and Colman had been assured by him that he intended his opposition against the winter houses.

The fear of this new star appearing in the east, suddenly seized upon Messieurs Linley, Harris, and Colman: and strengthened by sundry acts of parliament, they determined to support their monopolies, quite deaf to the obvious principle, that their RIGHT was but a *trust* for others; and that the demands of a growing population could never be comprised in the original intention of their patents. AGAIN, that the reason assigned by Charles the Second, for so benefiting Killegrew and Davenant, was, that a suitable entertainment under their regulation might be provided for his people—such a one in a word as, while it relaxed them from the toils of life, tended sensibly to their improvement in virtue. Whether the king or his advisers reasoned well or ill, is not here the question. Such was the plea on which the exclusive privilege was bestowed; and the patentees could have no other foundation to rest on. Yet they never supposed it beyond the competence of the magistrates of the Tower Hamlets, to grant a license for some *minor* amusements of a theatre; they might have tumblers and dancing-dogs, every thing that vitiated taste and debased society. "All that is contemptible or dangerous shall be yours; but if you once dare to become moral and enlightened, you infringe our exclusive rights, and we, with certain magistrates in our interest, will commit you as rogues and vagabonds."

Absurdity seldom went greater lengths than on the business of the Royalty. The patentee of Covent Garden wrote to the *public*. Colman addressed the *public;* and little Quick, too, in the columns of a newspaper marched in double quick time to the support of Mr. Harris. The latter gentleman, whose advice had been asked by Ryder as to his engaging with Palmer in the summer, replied, "It is impossible that I, or indeed any friend of yours, can approve of your engaging in a theatre that has no legal authority for opening; any magistrate for the county of Middlesex could inform you better." Linley, I believe, did not write any thing upon the subject. He could not be expected to *compose* the existing difference. All the former discords of the western proprietors were resolved into harmony upon the present occasion.

But the players themselves, who, in the way of their profession, thought more of the shadow than the reality, took fire

at the insult implied in the musty acts of parliaments so alarmingly quoted in their teeth. They who, in wandering into the haunts of the "king's servants," were wont to be considered as "gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon," now found that, by extending their stroll, they had lost their gentility, and become obnoxious to the treatment, which the sage councils of *better times* empowered a magistracy, who could *not* read, to inflict upon sundry rogues and vagabonds who *could*. Place produced all this mighty difference in the same character. The great moral satirist illustrates the change in question.

> "See the same man, in vigour, in the gout;
> Alone, in company; in place, or out;
> Drunk at a borough, civil at a ball;
> Friendly at Hackney, faithless at Whitehall."

The theatre itself was remarkably well constructed for the quarter wherein it stood. Its boxes were few; its pit commodious, though small; but its galleries were unusually deep and ample. If the *gods* were ever turbulent in their blest abodes, the want of room was seldom likely to cause their displeasure.

The motto chosen by Palmer had a reference to himself, rather than the purpose of playing, and was therefore faulty. *Vincit qui patitur*; "He conquers who endures." Unless it might be supposed to turn over its application, from the manager, to a presumed *hardy* class of visitors, who, to be sure, constantly ENDURE *much*, and CONQUER *every thing*. He opened his theatre on Wednesday, the 20th of June; the play-bill is now before me. *As You Like it*, followed by *Miss in her Teens*. Palmer was the Jaques of the play, and the Captain Flash of the farce. His brother William sang the songs of Amiens, and performed Garrick's character of Fribble. The other names have left nothing whatever upon my mind. I suffered greatly, I remember, by the pressure in entering the house; and my wishes were sincerely with Palmer during his struggle; his address through the whole night was admirable:—

> "Young maidens wav'd
> Their kerchiefs, and old women wept for joy."

But I must not forget to record, that Mr. Braham, then a mere boy, sang between the first and second acts of the comedy. Much as he was admired, perhaps even his pillow,

on that evening, did not suggest a vision so brilliant, as the fame which he has now realised.

The performances of the night had been for the benefit of the London Hospital. The company had not acted for "hire, gain, or reward." After the farce, Palmer came forward, and read, from a written paper, an address so admirable, that it certainly spoke itself. It ended thus: "Until it is announced, that this house shall be again opened with a new species of entertainment not subjecting me to danger, I humbly take my leave."

I have rather strong reasons for thinking, that Arthur Murphy held the pen for Palmer through this business; for the ability of the actor was quite of another kind. And thus ended the attempt to transfer the poetry of Shakspeare, and the whim of Garrick, once more to the eastern side of the metropolis.

While this business was in discussion, the magistrates had summoned Mr. Palmer before them, with the intention of actually committing him, if he did not produce the authority on which he relied for resisting the patent rights of the western sovereigns. The parties met in an up-stairs room of the tavern, and Palmer's dexterity did not desert him. He assured them, that "the papers were at his lodgings, but a street's length off; and if they would allow him, he would go himself for them, and be back in two minutes." To this there was a ready assent on the part of magistracy. Palmer treated the party with his usual bow of humility, turned up the whites of his eyes, and bid "God Almighty bless them for their kindness!" He retired in haste, and shut the door after him: but as the key was outside of it, he very gently turned it in the lock, and without the slightest noise in withdrawing it, put the key into his pocket. The party waited with growing impatience, and time had elapsed beyond all reasonable limit; the bell was rung, that the waiter, who, in course, knew Mr. Palmer's lodgings, might tell him, "that the magistrates could not sit there much longer, and desired to know what detained him?" The waiter knocked at the door, and begged to be admitted. My learned friend Const, who was in the room, saw the business in a minute; and was, perhaps, not the only man at the table, who laughed heartily at this *stage-door* interruption. A neighbouring locksmith soon after released the party; but Mr. Palmer was to be caught before *he* could be locked up, and that danger for the present, he had effectually averted.

And such a man was Palmer, bursting, as it happened, into tears or laughter; ready for a supplication or a jest; to

use the terms "best friend," or "scoundrel," as he stood on one side of a door or the other. Idle and yet energetic, specious and fallacious, a creature of the moment, adopting hurry and pathos as the means of carrying his point; combined with a personal address, for which I know no name but that of *proud humility*; and you granted what he asked less from the propriety, perhaps, of the request, than from the sense of slight compassion, that so grand a figure should condescend to supplicate, and the personal complacency that was implied in having a favour to bestow upon him.

The Royalty Theatre being precluded from the representation of the regular drama, burlettas, interludes of music and dancing, operas, farces, and pantomimes, were proposed; and for these the magistrate's license was imagined to be sufficient. But, upon submitting a case to Bearcroft, for his opinion, he was decidedly against the legal right.

"I am of opinion, that no license under the 26th Geo. II. c. 36. can authorise the performance of any entertainments of the kind described in the query, and falling within the meaning of the 10th Geo., and consequently that the performers in such entertainments will be liable to be proceeded against under the last-mentioned statute, and that of 17 Geo. II. I am aware that the practice has been otherwise, but I have always thought it illegal.

"EDWARD BEARCROFT.

"*Lincoln's Inn, June* 29th, 1787."

Now this terrible 10th of Geo. II. enacted, "that no person shall for hire, gain, or reward, act, represent, or perform, or cause to be acted, &c. &c. any interlude, tragedy, comedy, *play, farce, or other entertainment of the stage*, except under a patent from the crown, or a licence from the Lord Chamberlain, as by said act is provided."

To be sure here was a ground of interminable strife in the *construction* of the terms "other entertainments of the stage." It might mean either such as are given at all *upon a stage*, or such as have heretofore been so given: it might admit a novel exhibition there, or exclude it altogether. But it was obvious, that what was in the pleasure solely of the sovereign, or of the Lord Chamberlain, was here decidedly favourable to the patentees. An exclusive grant of the crown cannot well be recalled, secured by a royal patent. Its object is little likely to be infringed or frustrated by any rash concession of the Lord Chamberlain. A *stage* monarch shares in the prerogative of sovereigns: at least power will most probably

think that he "can do no wrong," and confine rather than confirm these *liberties* of the Tower Hamlets.

However, the Royalty continued to represent pantomimes and musical pieces, of which Don Juan was certainly the best, and Palmer himself "cabined, cribbed, confined," as an actor, sometimes recited Murphy's Tale from Baker's Chronicle; at others, Collins's Ode on the Passions, and lowered himself to become useful. The steady manliness of old Bannister never forsook him: he had besides Lee Lewes, Leoni, Delpini, and the Gibbs; and his bills talked at times, perhaps truly, of visitors from the *west* end of the town.

It appears to me, upon a revision of the proceedings, that the conduct of the patentees was on the whole injurious to their permanent interests. I do not think that much of their profit was derived from so remote a part of the town. At first a new theatre might attract partially from their usual audiences, and any striking novelty would tempt curiosity the distance even of three miles: but convenience would always narrow this danger within slender limits, and the eastern theatre must be contented in the main with the spectators in its district. We are then to examine another point; whether it was better to wink at its being a play-house, or drive it into exhibitions of another nature, with which ultimately its visitors might be contented? I should incline on policy, to the former course. It is dangerous to force men into the mysteries of evasion; it is dangerous to try the inventive dexterity of strong interest. While unexamined, your musty titles are secure; time has sanctified them, and little attention is excited to their original propriety. But persecution on the one side, begets scrutiny on the other, and the exact measure of innovation is at length ascertained. You have then awakened a host of greedy speculators, and new amusements will crowd about you. The adventurers may ultimately fail, but while they keep their houses open, they do the regular theatres nightly mischief. Your staple commodity moreover is apt to tire; the old stock of attraction, your sterling plays, must find either first-rate actors, or expensive embellishments, essential to their repetition. Genius will not always arise, because it is called. In the mean time, your rivals display their showy temptations, and good taste is not a very general quality. You are at last compelled to a competition of their own class, and your great distinction is a nullity. The public mind follows the direction it has been suffered to take; and the drama for which you originally contended, is lost in the unworthy contest.

At the Haymarket this summer, Mr. Colman made one of

those hasty attempts to open as early as the 16th of May, without awaiting the close of the winter houses, and he brought out a very sensible actor, of the name of Browne, in the character of Hamlet. This gentleman I presume to have been selected, agreeably to the usual policy of managers, to supply the loss of a particular kind of merit. Mr. Browne was supposed to be of the school of Henderson. Judgment he did not want, but the fire of genius certainly never blazed forth. If any proof had been required of Henderson's amazing talent, it was afforded by the simple fact, that so able an actor as Browne never approached him.

The experiment of early commencement lasted a week, and the house then closed. On the 11th of the following month, June, it opened again : the great rivals having been pleased to terminate their season.

Mr. Cumberland retained his power as an essayist, much longer than his dramatic talent. A comedy called the Country Attorney, was on the 7th of July very coldly received, and certainly does not merit any particular remark. I may, for the benefit of future dramatists, just point out the absurdity of an author's trying the stale incident of introducing the unknown wife of a son to his father, to captivate him with her accomplishments, and producing a reconciliation, by showing the old gentleman, that his boy has done the very thing which alone could satisfy his father. John Bannister had an early respect for Cumberland, and acted a character called Jack Volatile, with much effort; but the *salt* was not there to make the matter savoury.

Short as these notices must necessarily be, I cannot allow myself to pass over the production of Inkle and Yarico, a comedy with music, by the younger Colman, without testifying the delight with which it was received by all ranks. The interest in some degree was caught from the original tale in the Spectator, but carried home to every heart by the happiest skill ; and the additional characters, whether solid or whimsical, were so judiciously conceived by their author, and so admirably sustained by their performers, that it is highly probable, this piece will continue to be acted, when many of his more laboured compositions are only known in the closet. So much superior in point of dramatic effect is a piece founded on a simple and well-known story, to the untried inventions of the richest fancy. Although I am fully aware of the amazing difficulty of adding to the stock of admired fictions, it has always seemed to me as much the result of judgment, as necessity, that led our Shakspeare to accept the fables known to his audience, either by popular collections of such

matters, or previous dramatic experiment. He knew his power to animate them by character, and amplify them by sentiment.

Bannister, jun. gave at his benefit, an interlude called *English Readings;* and, considering Colman's conduct, as to the Royalty, it was not a little singular to find the principal incident, the alarm of the readers at being taken before the magistrates for displaying their talent to the public without authority. But to do the manager justice, he does make the alarm frighten away the *audience.*

Miss Farren, after *Much Ado about Nothing*, on her own night, in which King acted Benedick to her Beatrice, tried a new musical farce, called the *Test of Love:* it was a test, that certainly never failed her before.

Inkle and Yarico did the theatre the greatest service through the season. It may be as well to preserve the original cast of it. Inkle, Bannister, jun.; Sir C. Curry, Parsons; Medium, Bladdeley; Trudge, Edwin; Yarico, Mrs. S. Kemble; Narcissa, Mrs. Bannister; Wowski, Miss George. &c.

It was at Edwin's benefit here this season, that the *Village Lawyer* began his English practice. They who remember the effect of the original Scout, and Sheepface, will care little that the piece is from the French, and that it has been questioned, by whom it was rendered into such English as may be found in it. Perhaps Colman, either father or son, might touch upon it; for it is adapted very successfully to our feeling of farcical humour.

The winter season of 1787–8, as far as Drury Lane was concerned, showed the greatest feebleness in the management. Mr. King evidently had too little power to enable him either to form a plan, or carry one into effect. He could get nobody in the *property* to attand to him, and property was certainly essential at every step. He was constantly remonstrating with Sheridan, but without the slightest effect. Money could not be found for the expected decorations; and the strongest company that ever was assembled in a green room, wanted as much more strength to organize its powers, and preserve its attraction. Kemble made an alteration of the Pilgrim for them; that is, he pruned away the indelicacies, which Beaumont and Fletcher could not, perhaps, *but* leave in their comedy; but which Sir John Vanbrugh ought to have struck out, when he revived the play in 1700, and had the expiring aid of Dryden in the prologue and epilogue, and a secular mask supplied by him. It is melancholy to remark the errors of genius. Dryden printed his almost dying spleen against Sir Richard Blackmore, whom he denominates Quack

Marus. It is there we find the often quoted couplet, which records that physician's practice of writing in his chariot, and one wittier still, though more offensive.

> "At leisure hours, in epic song he deals,
> Writes to the rumbling of his coach's wheels,
> Prescribes in haste, and seldom kills by rule,
> But rides triumphant between stool and stool."

On its present revival, the symmetry of Mrs. Jordan's lower parts was more the theme of praise, than even her new-found talent of beating a drum, or admirable imitation of an old woman. Yet Julietta really afforded great scope for her inimitable drollery.

On the 8th of December, Mr. Kemble was married to the amiable widow of Mr. Brereton; and never certainly was there an union formed with sounder judgment, as far as permanent happiness was likely to be the result of discretion in the choice. I speak with great tenderness and respect of a lady, from whom I have received so much kindness, when I transiently allude to the nonsense uttered at the time. There were not wanting persons who, as they imagined, found this match inadequate to Mr. Kemble's claims, however it equalled his wishes. There can be little doubt that, if he had much regarded either birth or fortune, both would have eagerly courted his acceptance: but he knew himself, and his profession too well, to think that a wife for him, should be of a disproportionate or different rank from his own. As to remain an actor was his settled determination, Mr. Kemble knew, that without a perfect familiarity with theatrical habits, a thousand occasions must arise, in which the wife, taken from another sphere, would feel herself unhappy, from causes quite unintentional, and unavoidable. He, therefore, looked about him for quiet manners, steady principle, and gentle temper; and he found these, as they had stood the trial of some distressing circumstances attendant upon a former union. He proposed himself, therefore, to Mrs. Brereton; and I, upon full knowledge, say, it was fortunate for him that he was accepted. But I do not mean to anticipate here my view of Mr. Kemble in domestic life.

After they were married in the morning, Mrs. Bannister, who accompanied the bride to church, asked where they intended to eat their wedding dinner? My friend had made no particular arrangement on this important occasion, and said, "he did not know; at home he supposed." Mrs. Bannister, upon this information, that they were really disengaged, said, if they would honour Mr. Bannister and herself by partaking

of their family dinner, in Frith Street, they should feel flattered by such a mark of their regard. Mr. Kemble, who really esteemed Bannister, cheerfully assented. An early dinner was prepared; for both Bannister and Mrs. Kemble acted in the West Indian that evening. Kemble arrived rather tardily; they began even to fear that he would not come; and some surprise, perhaps alarm, crept among the little circle above stairs; when, at last, he was seen very deliberately approaching the door, and good humour revived upon his entrance. A Miss Guy, a friend of Mrs. Bannister's, dined with them. Soon after the cloth was removed, Mrs. Kemble and Mr. Bannister went off to the theatre, to act the parts of Belcour, and Louisa Dudley, in the West Indian; and Gradus and Miss Doiley in Who's the Dupe? The play-bills of the day in course did not anticipate, but stiled her Mrs. Brereton. The day following, she was put up as Mrs. Kemble, for Lady Anne, in Richard III.; but it was Smith, and not her own husband, who, in the part of that monster, exclaimed to her so ungallantly,

"With all my heart—*I hate you.*"

The remainder of the wedding-day is soon told. Kemble sat amusing himself till the evening in the drawing-room, occasionally conversing, but commonly playing with the children in their own way; and when it grew late, he ordered a coach to take him to the play-house, from which he brought home his wife, to the house in Caroline Street, Bedford Square, which had been prepared for her reception.

A story of a very different nature, as to this day, having been circulated at one time, and even printed since his death, I obtained the preceding from the accurate recollection of my old friend, Bannister; and as it is a true, so perhaps it may be thought no unamusing sketch of the manners of a man unpretending and plain at most times, and detesting all unnecessary ostentation and importance at any.

At Covent Garden Theatre, on the 15th of December, a comedy of Mrs. Inchbald's was produced, called *All on a Summer's Day*. It failed, and the fair author wrote a letter upon the subject in the newspapers: it stated in very confused terms, that this play "was given to the theatre, contrary to her inclination, and even contrary to her most earnest entreaties." It was, in short, by the mistake of the manager that it was produced; and she really "entertains no suspicion that her advantage was not seriously considered in its production." How Mr. Harris came to be so inflexible,

as to yield neither to the author's inclination, nor most earnest entreaties, she has not explained; but his liberal, and even generous conduct to her on many occasions, are asserted with a warmth somewhat at variance with the strange attack upon him, as to the failure before us. With some little experience as an author, I profess, in the face of an admirable likeness of David Garrick, that I never found managers so importunate as to carry away by force, a production, which I had myself condemned, and which had lain in my drawers two years, as "past praying for." Let authors be contented to take their fate as it chances: it is not a subject of vast astonishment, that some efforts of the happiest muse are inferior to others; but as to suspicion about *their* advantage, let them remember, that it never can be the policy of a manager to discredit a successful writer; in the experiment he loses some *money*, and the time taken in the preparation of failure, which might have ministered to success.

Mr. Harris was sometimes inclined to try his experience of the stage in the alteration of an old play, and he brought out the *King and no King* of Beaumont and Fletcher, on the 14th of January, 1788. There was a time, we are assured by Mr. Colman,

"When Bessus walk'd the stage by Falstaff's side."

That time is I fear, fated never to return. Mr. Harris's alteration was received coldly. Yet after all, the King and no King may one day revive from the slumber of an age. Mr. Colman, seconded by such a genius as Powell, made Philaster supply, in his own language, the place even of Hamlet.

The first benefit of Mrs. Siddons was taken on the 21st of January; and Kemble acted, to her Cordelia, the prodigy of dramatic creation, King Lear. I have seen him since in the character, but he never again achieved the excellence of that night. Subsequently he was too elabourately aged, and quenched with infirmity the insane fire of the injured father. The curse, as he then uttered it, harrowed up the soul: the gathering himself together, with the hands convulsively clasped, the encreasing fervour and rapidity, and the suffocation of the conclusive words, all evinced consummate skill and original invention. The countenance too was finely made up, and in grandeur approached the *most* awful impersonation of Michael Angelo. It will not be suspected that I speak this profanely. The highest nature, from the pencil of man, must still be a modification of human form. The per

formance was hailed with delight by many of Mr. Garrick's friends. The truth seems to have been that, in a few points, there was no inferiority; as a whole, nothing ever approached the influence of Garrick in this, which, if I may venture upon a disputed question, I do from my heart and judgment pronounce to be greatly superior as dramatic character, to Hamlet, to Macbeth, to Othello. Mrs. Siddons acted the Cordelia of Tate. The passion for Edgar is an excrescence, but pardonable on the stage, which has endured the restoration of Lear.

On this occasion, 347*l.* 10*s.* was taken at the door, and this was the greatest sum that had ever been taken in that theatre, except at her first benefit, to Lady Macbeth, when 351*l.* was the receipt at the doors. The presents were at all times very considerable; but perhaps no actress, before or since, ever possessed equal intimacy with fashionable life. To be the friend of Mrs. Siddons, was a distinction that implied fine taste and correct manners.

I copy, from a note now lying before me, the names of literary characters moving in the train of this great actress: Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Erskine, Mrs. Piozzi, Mr. Greatheed, Horace Walpole, Mr. Malone. Mrs. Siddons herself remains; but of the ingenious and excellent persons whom I have named! "Ha! no more moving!—still as the grave."

The fashion filled the boxes and one half of the pit. To speak technically, a more brilliant house was never seen: the spectators, however, must be taken here exclusively into the account—the mere play-house then seldom changed its appearance; its form never. I cannot be reconciled to the ruinous outlay of money in the present day. Architecture! I hear of thousands of pounds expended under the imposing title—I see nothing that merits the name. Misappropriation of ancient structure! sacred for prophane, temples for play-houses—heaviness without and glare within. Thus the essential object escapes us, and we accept

"Trifles for choice matters—worth a sponge."

On the 31st of January, a tragedy called the Fate of Sparta, or the Rival Kings, from the pen of Mrs. Cowley, was acted at Drury Lane Theatre. The subject was taken from the Life of Agis, in Plutarch, which had been expanded into a fable of great interest by the dramatic skill of the author. Leonidas and Cleombrotus are kings of Sparta, the latter wedded to the daughter of the former. Through the artifices of Amphares, a disunion of the two kings is produced, and

the son-in-law is expelled. Like Coriolanus, however, he returns for vengeance, with an army of barbarians; and the city being menaced with destruction, the wife of Cleombrotus, like the mother of Coriolanus, comes forth to endeavour at all events to "shake his fell purpose." She passes the guard in the habit of one of the sacred virgins, and has a long interview with her husband, who, by the concealing property of a veil, neither suspects her form nor action to be his wife's, and still more astonishing, in her speech does not start at the well-known accents of his Chelonice. This Spartan insensibility is at last forcibly dispelled by the removal of the all-concealing veil, and the wife moulds the hero to her purpose.

It is obvious that the situation is one of great improbability. A still stronger objection lies against the sentiments and their garb of expression. The first have none of the character of antiquity; the second indulges in the flowery prettinesses of a bosom perfectly at its ease. What poetry adds to the common language of passion must at all events be consonant; otherwise it will excite associations in the hearer at variance with the tone of his mind, and destroy the sympathy it was designed to promote. One instance may be sufficient to exemplify the criticism; and the author stands so securely on the fame of her comedy, that it will not injure her reputation to deduce from a forgotten tragedy, the principles of more perfect composition.

> CLEOMBROTUS (*smiling.*)
> "I'd not sought bliss on thrones.
> Thus as a lady would you chide, and this
> Let all the subject world receive as law.
> Let them be taught that in the humble shade,
> Far from the reach of proud ambition's eye,
> Felicity has raised her grassy seat,
> And wantons there with love.
> But, madam, I was born to reign!
> And he *so* born, feels fires that vulgar souls
> Could not endure. Felicity to us
> Is not a nymph in humble russet clad,
> Sipping the dew-drops from the silver thorn,
> Or weaving flow'rs upon a streamlet's brink—
> Oh no! she's SCEPTER'D, and her gifts are CROWNS."

The two broken lines in the above are marks of carelessness and haste. Hemistics, in classic authors are found from necessity, never from design. The stern laws of quantity sometimes render the supplement nearly hopeless. Accident, in a remarkable instance in Virgil, filled one up in the warmth of recitation. It is needless to add how unsuitable the language quoted is to a Spartan king, with battle raging around

him, and uttered to his wife in the scene of her supplication for her father and her country.

I also notice in the general structure of her verse, a want of fullness and weight; and am apt to think, that she did not try her lines by reciting them audibly: if she had done so, her ear would have admonished her that more substance and greater flow were essential to public declamation.

Mrs. Siddons produced considerable effect in Chelonice; and Barrymore in the traitor Amphares, bustled through treason and murder with vast applause. Kemble took the character of Cleombrotus, without being able to see in it what the fair writer intended should be there; and I think he never condescended to give the semblance of power where it strictly could not be found.

I have often revolved the question in my mind, "how far an actor is entitled to play the critic in the character he is performing?" If his *judgment* alone be exerted, he is fallible like other men;—if his *prejudice* enter into the field, it is ruinous to the author. You must at last depend upon him, for not playing false, if he cannot play well; with this little security that, if other parts make their way before the audience, he may be roused into unexpected exertion, and do that for his own fame, that might never have been done for yours. Let me not in this observation be thought to bear too hard upon the actor: it is only from his feeling, and taste, and knowledge, that you can expect success; when these unfortunately tell him his part is unnatural, feeble or ridiculous, what is his choice? simply this; whether to act it as if he thought it admirable, or throw it up altogether, or play it as he thinks it deserves? By the first, he tries to deceive the audience;—by the second, he deserts his station;—by the last, he confessedly betrays his trust. I must leave the difficulty to the causist. Cleombrotus, however, could have less hopes of immortality, than his namesake, who, on reading Plato's treatise, jumpt into the sea.

Mrs. Cowley at this time occupied a great space in the literature of the country. Besides her dramatic essays, serious and comic, she wrote a great deal in the public prints, and was one of the poetical contributors to a journal called The World; the chief features of which were a more marked reflexion of literary and fashionable existence, than had been displayed by other papers of the day. With an intimate knowledge of both its conductors, I can safely say that much was to be expected from their powers of mind, more from their experience of actual life. They assumed a style utterly unknown in English literature. It seemed always to hint

rather than discuss, and to lighten rather than shine. They were at all times entertaining, and often instructive. Their taste, whether we look to morals or intellect, was generally good. Genius, in particular, was followed with a veneration certainly not affected, and the public attention was called, with an authoritative voice, to the claims of conspicuous virtue or conspicuous talent. The eccentricity of style at first perplexed its readers, at last diverted them; and in aid of its amusement, its politics were conspicuously loyal. Majesty was treated with affectionate veneration. Mr. Fox, the leader of opposition, was rather systematically discredited; and Sheridan was eternally suggested into a station, which I believe they who best knew him, never for a moment thought him steady enough to fill.

Among the poetical contributors to this paper was Robert Merry, who assumed for a signature to his effusions his association to a foreign academy—Della Crusca. He was always an impassioned, and often eloquent writer; had been living at Florence with Mrs. Piozzi, Mr. Greatheed, and Mr. Parsons; and a volume of much entertainment, printed at Florence in the year 1785, proceeded from their love and cultivation of poetry. Merry was easily induced to indulge his muse on his return to England; and a poetical passion was soon feigned, probably felt, for the accomplished mind of Mrs. Cowley, who replied to him under the signature Anna Matilda. The secret was well kept by the printer, and the parties became known personally by an accidental rencontre at an inn. Merry was an enthusiast in beauty as well as verse; and the proportion of the former to the latter in the lady was less than might be desired: with a rhapsodical farewell, the correspondence closed: which, while it was a secret, had been ascribed, and never formally denied by them, to the brightest geniuses of the age. I remember Sheridan did not discourage the attribution of Merry's share to himself; and Mrs. Piozzi was usually asserted to be his correspondent. But the perhaps extreme severity of Mr. Gifford taught the public to visit with derision what they had so ardently admired. The *persons* even of the victims smarted under his lash; and the outrageous passion they affected was ridiculed as false or indecerous. Some censure, too, justly fell upon the very *quality* of their composition: but although a necessity for haste cannot be pleaded in extenuation of defect, since what is not good ought in strictness to be suppressed, yet the demand for diurnal amusement allowing no time for deeper thought or more accurate expression, candour must after all place these writers in the first rank of those "who write with

ease." For some occasional flights, in which might be inferred a deficiency of reverence towards the MOST AWFUL of subjects, if such rant be examined, it will be found so utterly absurd, as scarcely to be worth the labour of serious exposure.

On the 10th of March, Mr. Smith took his farewell benefit at Drury Lane, and the whole of the pit was laid into the boxes to accommodate the large circle of his friends in upper life. There was an immense crowd, and a riot from the intrusion of people into places which others had taken. Mr. Smith, a little warmly, undertook the accommodation of *all* his friends at the "hazard of his life." On these occasions the heart will always say too much in spite of the understanding. He acted Macbeth himself, Kemble taking Macduff; Mrs. Siddons performed Lady Macbeth. His farewell address was principally levelled at the taste of the Jockey Club, he was no longer in the tyrant Richard to call "a horse! a horse!"

"But mount white Surry for the Beacon course,"

and enjoy the retirement in the country, which he owed to the bounty of the public. To use his own expression, Mr. Smith had "served thirty-five campaigns under the ablest generals—Barry and Garrick," and now resigned the youthful gaiety of Charles Surface to younger bloods. The farce was Bon Ton, in which his old friend Tom King and Miss Farren showed the most perfect knowledge of the art, along with their respect for this gentlemanly actor.

Although I have already given my opinion generally of his talents, a few parting words upon this occasion, while they acknowledge the satisfaction he so frequently gave to me, may perfect the notion I wish to leave of his distinct excellence. He was then, certainly, the most *manly* performer of my time. He gave the completest idea of a warm, generous, and courageous character, and this not assumed, but inherent; reflected from the actor upon the part, rather than imposed by the part upon the actor. In the comedies of Congreve, Farquhar, and Vanbrugh, there has been nothing since his time endurable. Manly gaiety and frivolity are of different forms; the substitutes of whatever age have looked I confess childish after Smith. The Charles of the School for Scandal died with him. The moderns give, very beautifully I admit, a Charles of the *present day*. For this, in part, we must blame the alteration of our dress, and the consequent familiarity of our manners.

Mr. Smith retired to the enjoyments he had proposed to

himself in a country life. He not seldom coursed by letter over the fields of his old achievements; and preserved to a great age his interest in the stage, and his love for those who had formerly been his partners of the scene.

Bertie Greatheed, the intimate friend of Mrs. Piozzi, and of Mrs. Siddons, had bestowed his utmost efforts upon a tragedy called the Regent: and he very skilfully applied himself to produce a part for Kemble exactly suited to his powers. Without detailing the plot, I may remark that interest was carried to agony in the scene where the child of Dianora is shown under the axe to extort the mother's consent to accept the Regent. On the first night the suspense lasted too long; this admitted of correction, and the incident afterwards excited only *momentary* terror. The point when the terrible becomes horrible, if not discerned in the closet by the author, will be strongly marked always by the feelings of an audience. On the second night of the Regent, Mrs. Siddons became too ill to support the character of Dianora, and the third night of the play stood over, unfortunately, to the 26th of April. A greater misfortune could not possibly befall an author. Mrs. Piozzi, with that brilliant readiness that distinguished her, found in the seat of Greatheed (Guy's Cliff), the ready means of coming at Shakspeare, and Mrs. Siddons gave the most enchanting effect to the following happy allusion in the Epilogue:—

> "While Shakspeare's tomb o'erlooks the plain below,
> Where Avon's consecrated waters flow;
> So long, so clear, BRITANNIA'S *fame* shall last,
> For strength of nature, and for truth of taste!
> Warm'd yet unscorch'd by Phœbus' friendly ray,
> Verdant our meads, unfading is our Bay!
> Nor shall this PRIMROSE I present to-night,
> Pluck'd from fair Avon's brink—though PALE WITH FRIGHT,
> Be deem'd inferior to a GALLICK LAUREL,
> If, Ladies, you'll assert your country's quarrel."

The succession of new plays obliged me to delay the notice of Grimaldi's death, which occurred on the 14th of March. In broad humour he fully equalled his son, who has given such infinite delight to the present generation. In the observation of those minute peculiarities, which are characteristic of our nature from infancy to age, our friend Joe has the discernment of a philosopher, and the truth of a mirror.

Kelly had at length brought his manner nearer to the style of the English performance, and grew daily into favour with the town. On the night of his benefit, 7th April, he prevailed upon Madame Mara to act Mandane in Artaxerxes, and

her efforts in the airs excited astonishment: nothing so perfect had ever been heard on our stage. Mrs. Crouch threw great interest into Arbaces; and Kelly bustled through Artabanes, to an immense house.

On the following evening, at Covent Garden, a comedy called the Ton, was imperfectly played, and unfavourably received: it was the avowed production of Lady Wallace. The object of the play was to expose the follies of fashion—husbands attached to any thing but their wives—bubbles too at play—in short, every way bubbles. The stern breath of criticism blew them to their trial, and they were *out*. This comedy boasted the very flattering distinction of a Prologue by Jekyll. I preserve its pleasantry.

> "The *country justice*, with terrific frown,
> May scare a district, or appal a town;
> May hurl dire vengeance on a guilty elf,
> Who dares to do—*just what he does himself;*
> But who shall rule the Justice? who shall dare
> To tell his Worship that He must not swear?
> Drive him to *church*, prohibit his diversions,
> Or fine him well, for *Sabbath days excursions?*"

Mrs. Abington had been exhibiting at Covent Garden Theatre through the season, the still admirable remains of what I always thought the purest comic acting that I have ever seen. For her benefit this season she acted Beatrice, a part for which she was peculiarly qualified. In passing over the long series of her performances, this always seems to press itself forward in my memory as a perfect thing. For her farce she took the delightful *High Life below Stairs*, and acted, for the first time, the part of Kitty, rendered a source of endless amusement by Miss Pope at the other theatre. I said formerly, when speaking of Dodd, that he was so essentially genteel, that his airs did not at all seem the cast graces of his master. Compared with Miss Pope, the same criticism was excited by Mrs. Abington. She was the lady of the house *romping* among her servants. A long experience enables me, I think, to state decidedly, that the perfect representation of refinement and vulgarity never belongs to one actress. The domestics of Mrs. Abington had too much of the lady. The fashionable woman of Mrs. Jordan had always some *tang* of the country girl.

The stage, in holding the mirror up to nature, opposes the glass of comedy, capable of reflecting a multitude as they are; or a magnifier which enlarges a single object into the ridiculous of farce. Mrs. Inchbald, capable of both, devoted to farce the impudent absurdity of animal magnetism. One of

our follies is so soon blotted out by another, that there are not many among us aware of the full extravagance of this pretended science. Its power over the nerves of weak subjects must be admitted to be real; but the fancy of the patient was more operant than the action of the doctor's hands; and let it be remembered that he usually selected the subject for the crisis. Faith in him was, perhaps, more essential than good works. To give an instance of the total delusion under which the true believers laboured, I shall here repeat a story told me by a great artist, sitting in his study, with the works of Jacob Behmen laying before him. "His wife one day, he said, came home from a morning visit, and on her coming into his room, presented him with the most beautiful bouquet of flowers, that he had ever seen arranged. Delighted with their forms and the harmony of their blended hues, he raised them to his nose to enjoy their perfume: they had none. In the utmost astonishment he remarked the circumstance to his lady. 'My dear, these flowers are without scent!' 'They are so,' she replied, 'at present; but the scent may be restored.' 'How, in the name of Heaven?' exclaimed the husband. 'Thus,' replied the wife, simply taking the nosegay from his hand into her own, and with a slight compressure instantly returning it. Nothing, said the artist, ever was more reviving than the perfume now exhaled from these flowers. 'And from whom, my dear, did you derive this miraculous power?' 'From Dr. De Mainauduc.' 'You have then been received?' 'I have, and you will be so too: the doctor is aware that you will desire it.' 'And shall I obtain this power also?' 'This is NOTHING to the powers with which you will be invested.'"

Methinks I hear the reader demand, "Was this gentleman in his senses?" I answer, no man could converse more elegantly, and rationally, and piously. "Did he himself believe the story he had been telling?" I am sure he did. I have inserted it here as a very striking instance of utter delusion. I recollect nothing in the farce so characteristic of the mystical pretensions of the great juggler.

Among the agreeable events of the month, Palmer, who, if not a great actor, was unquestionably an actor of the greatest use, returned to Drury Lane Theatre, and performed on the 25th his own Sir Toby in Twelfth Night. The generous sympathy of the audience expressed itself in shouts of welcome. Sorrow for his failure in the east, joy in his return to the west. Barrymore had for some time been his substitute, and had evinced considerable improvement.

But I will not refuse to the reader what passed, on this occasion, *behind* the curtain.

The return of Palmer again to Drury, was a subject of infinite importance, in a theatrical point of view, both to himself and Sheridan. The meeting between these men of *address* was therefore expected to produce something remarkable. Palmer made quite a scene of it. After his profound bow, he approached the author of the School for Scandal, with an air of penitent humility; his head declined, the whites of his eyes turned upwards, his hands clasped together, and his whole air exactly that of *Joseph Surface* before Sir Peter Teazle. He began thus—

"My dear Mr. Sheridan, if you could but know what I feel at this moment—HERE (*laying one hand upon his heart.*)

Sheridan, with inimitable readiness, stopped him.

"Why JACK! you forget *I wrote it.*"

Palmer in telling the story himself, added, that the manager's wit cost him something; for, said he, "I made him add THREE pounds per week to the salary I had before my *desertion.*"

To a friend, who complimented him one day upon his *address*, over their wine, Palmer disclaimed the possession of that quality in any *remarkable* degree. "No," said he, "I really don't give myself the credit of being so irresistible as you have fancied me. There is, however, *one* thing in the way of address, that I think I *am* able to do. Whenever I am *arrested*, I think I can always persuade the sheriff's officer—to *bail me!*"

The reader will allow, in the way of *miracle*, Prince Hohenlohe to be a performer greatly *inferior* to Palmer.

In the arrangement of benefits this season, Mrs. Jordan had Friday the 2d of May, and Mrs. Siddons, Monday the 5th. The former acted Sir Harry Wildair in the Constant Couple, and the days of Woffington in some measure returned. Her little air upon her entrance, and the spouting Roxana and Statira formed the best apology for acting the character. What, truly, can any female effect in Sir Harry compared with such an actor as Lewis? There was one gracefully pleasing event when the curtain fell; Mrs. Jordan came herself forward, and with the most respectful interest gave out the benefit of Mrs. Siddons. She then withdrew to dress for her original part of Matilda in the lovely entertainment of Richard Cœur de Lion.

Mrs. Siddons then acted Dryden's All for Love. The tide had not set so strongly towards Shakspeare at that time as it has since done; nor had Kemble so completely identified

himself with the Roman character. The freedom and variety of Shakspeare's play, call, in Cleopatra, for an actress as majestic as Siddons, and playful as Jordan herself. It is a character, perhaps, more suggested than shown. The mind is so crowded with the reports of her voluptuous exhibition on the Cydnus, her assumption of the mantle and sword of Antony, her agility, carelessly exhibited in the public streets, and her panting for breath becoming as much a charm as her imitation of Venus, that what she has really to say and do in the face of the audience falls below expectation. Yet there are some points of transition from idleness to earnest interest, worthy of the greatest powers. One instance I claim permission to quote. Cleopatra to Antony.

> " Courteous lord, one word.
> Sir, you and I must part,—but that's not it:
> Sir, you and I have lov'd,—but there's not it;
> That you know well:
>
> Your honour calls you hence;
> Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,
> And all the gods go with you! upon your sword
> Sit laurell'd victory! and smooth success
> Be strew'd before your feet."

From a being of such endless captivation, what man could ever break? Were Madame Catalini an English actress, retaining her powers, such as she has sometimes wasted them on the dialogue of Italian operas, serious and comic, *she* alone, I think, might realize the idea formed of Cleopatra by Shakspeare. I may have said this before, for I have long thought it.

The excellence of Mrs. Siddons was nearly as much lost in Dryden's Cleopatra, as in the Catharine of the Farce to Kemble's Petruchio. Among her illustrious host on this night were M. de Calonne and Gibbon, to be now added to the mortuary list before given, over whom it was impossible to suppress an involuntary exclamation.

Upon a former occasion I mentioned the failures in the performance of Falstaff. However it was achieved, Mr. Palmer gave an amusing copy of the great original. He acted Sir John for Fosbrook's benefit on the 21st of May, in the Merry Wives of Windsor. His habitual gaiety and voluptuous expression did much, and the self-possession and trick of the scene perhaps more, on this occasion. There was a swagger of importance and sufficiency too about it, that sat more naturally upon him, than upon any of his competitors, and he fell

into the successive traps laid for him by the women as much from sensuality as avarice.

The bill at Covent Garden on the 2d of June, for Leoni's benefit, operated as an epistle to the Hebrews, and they crowded to assist a singer whom they so justly admired. Among them was to be numbered the aid of Master Braham, who on that night acted, or rather sang, for him in Poor Vulcan. Leoni had little himself as a singer below his falsetto, but that was almost as sweetly toned as the voice of Rubinelli. Its effect resembled the flute part of the organ, with the tremor stop upon it.

Mr. Smith had taken his farewell benefit, but still, as Shakspeare says, "there was some further compliment of leave-taking" between him and the audience. This occurred on the 9th of June, his last performance for the house. His address to the audience should be preserved, if merely for the purpose of ascertaining the variations of which such things are susceptible.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"After having devoted five and thirty years to your service, I now beg leave to retire.

"You have received me with candour, indulgence, and generosity. You believe, I hope, your kindness is not lost on me.

"Actors you have had—you will have—with better powers to please you. But this I must be bold to say, none can be found more properly ambitious of your favour—more studious at getting it—more grateful when it was got.

"This is the last time I am to appear before you in my public character.—May I hope the patronage and protection you have vouchsafed me *on* the stage, will be followed by some small esteem when I am off?

"Ladies and Gentlemen—farewell."

There were no tears shed most certainly on either side. To use a happy line, which some way or other Kelly hit upon, when treating of Smith's expression—"there was nothing

"To warm the sterile muscles into soul."

The address itself, too, though perfectly right as to its topics, was much too rigid and pointed in its expression:—"You have had—you will have"—"on the stage—and when off."

The taste of Garrick led him to desert the art of composition, and the trim and balance of a sentence, when ac-

knowledgment was intended to be affecting. Hear him in the paragraph imitated by Smith.

"I will very readily agree to my successors' having more skill and ability for their station than I have; but I defy them all to take more sincere and more uninterrupted pains for your favour, or to be more truly sensible of it than is your humble servant."

The acclamations of the audience were mingled with their tears. The imitation here is unquestionable: and it will be as little questioned that he who so altered the language conceived that he improved it. The reader of true taste will, however, decide in favour of the unaffected phraseology of Mr. Garrick.

During the summer recess, Mr. Sheridan the elder died at Margate, at an advanced age. He had intended, if he recovered strength at all, to proceed to Lisbon; but he was soon proved to be past recovery, and died with the satisfaction of leaving a son to carry the reputation of his family higher than either his father, himself, or his wife, all distinguished for their genius, had been able to carry it. Of his acting I cannot speak. His reading, though harsh, was remarkably accurate, and exemplified his theory in emphasis and pronunciation. The greatest compliment that he ever received was the attention of the late minister, Mr. Pitt. That most admirable orator had in his youth adopted the system of Sheridan, and followed him where many others left him. Mr. Pitt pronounced the word negotiation as Mr. Sheridan directs, ne-go-sha-shun. Like most theorists, Mr. Sheridan laid too much stress upon the art which he professed. He might add something of grace or beauty to speech; but the moral efficacy of language is independent of either accent, emphasis, or pronunciation.

After repeated perusal, I am of opinion that his Life of Swift is a composition of great merit; but though it may be feared he rates his virtues somewhat too high, and that, upon the whole, the estimate of Dr. Johnson may be the truer, yet I think he establishes the high consideration in which he was held by the political chieftains in Queen Anne's reign; and in fact proves an ascendancy, which, unaccompanied as it certainly was, by either rank or station, was one of the noblest evidences of mental power, in the history of our species.

Bishop Hurd was of opinion, that Addison was a more correct writer than Swift: I think he has himself shown abundant evidence to the contrary. Mr. Sheridan has noted the slips in construction and grammar through his many volumes; but they are not numerous, and of the latter kind,

some were the *actual* grammar of his day. But he is certainly the best model of pure idiomatical English, and his style is strong without epithets, as the athletic are muscular without flesh.

Mr. Sheridan may, I think, be now and then suspected of depreciating his contemporaries to exalt his hero. The days of *little* men he thought had arrived. Such pigmies, I presume, as Dr. Johnson, Burke, Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon. One must here pity, assuredly, either his blindness or his petulance. Old Mr. Sheridan was the adviser of Mrs. Siddons in the brilliant course of her first town seasons. I have already noticed his kindness as to Mr. Kemble.

I can afford but little space to Colman this summer; but it would be inexcusable to omit all mention of the younger Colman's *Ways and Means*. The scene is laid in the Ship Inn at Dover, and pleasanter people never were there assembled. Sir David Dunder, acted by the younger Bannister, was a very delightful sketch of a class of beings, who talk incessantly, and about every thing, and are impatient of interruption, which they can only cut down by affecting to know what others are desirous to say. The critics of the time censured the *bare* allusions in one scene, which they praised in another. The author took his revenge, for what he called 'malice and misrepresentation,' in his preface, but he might have let the town remain in ignorance that he had enemies; unless they might be presumed to exist from his merits.

> "Envy will merit, as its shade pursue;
> But, like a shadow, proves the substance true."

The father of Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, notwithstanding the march of time upon him, still retained sufficient force to act for the benefit of his son Stephen's wife. He performed the Miller of Mansfield with very superior effect, and needed nothing of his children's merit to give currency to his own. The house seemed to gaze upon him with reverence.

Miss Farren, although obliged to borrow the aid of King for the purpose, got up the School for Scandal, at the Summer Theatre, on the night of her benefit. The cast did not fluctuate much. Mrs. Inchbald, however, stumbled upon Lady Sneerwell; and John Bannister did his best in Charles Surface. The Richmonds, Damers, Conways, and so on, showed their admiration by their presence. As to her friends, this delightful actress might very early indeed apply the Derby motto, *Sans changer*.

BOOK THE SECOND.

FROM MR. KEMBLE'S BECOMING MANAGER OF DRURY LANE TO HIS RETIREMENT FROM THAT THEATRE.

CHAP. I.

Season of 1788-9.—*No arrangements settled at D. L.*—*Mr. King, his nondescript situation, discontent and flight.*—*Addresses the public.*—*The Proprietors conclude with Mr. Kemble.*—*Short address also from him.*—*Mr. Sheridan.*—*Warren Hastings.*—*Alarming indisposition of the King.*—*Mr. Kemble's views.*—*How supported.*—*Acts Lord Townley.*—*Improvements in Macbeth examined.*—*The Witches.*—*Mrs. Crouch censured, perhaps idly.*—*Mr. Kemble's great display of his art.*—*His Leon—Sciolto—Mirabel—Romeo—Revives Henry Eighth.*—*Dr. Johnson.*—*Siddons.*—*Takes Cromwell, leaving Wolsey to Mr. Bensley.*—*Hastings.*—*The Pannel.*—*Mrs. Jordan.*—*Zanga.*—*Produces Coriolanus.*

I AM now arrived at the season of 1788-9, on which, fortunately for the interests of the drama, Mr. Kemble accepted the management of Drury Lane Theatre. During the last season it might have occasionally appeared, even to the audience, that there was a want of steady systematic control. Mr. King was rather uneasy at the impression of actual responsibility, where he enjoyed scarcely more than the shadow of power. He had insisted upon quitting his irksome situation, and had been amused by entreaties, and treaties, to remain with more extensive authority. But as Mr. Sheridan so truly taught us in the Critic, "they are always late at that house;" and they literally opened the season without a manager. As the case was peculiar, it may be worth while, from the statement of Mr. King himself, to leave a standing memorial, how a playhouse should *not* be ma-

naged. I must abridge his most valuable paper, although in all respects worthy of so able a man. It exhibits a curious picture how tenacious men will sometimes be on the subject of power, which they will neither delegate nor exercise. It is true, that occasionally even during the last season, when there were expectations from a new play, in which Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons were to perform, something in the way of decoration and dress was at last wrung from the proprietors, but there was difficulty in bringing them to the decision; and the unfortunate stage-manager, compelled to ask his instructions at every step, stood like a cypher in the place of an unit, and did nothing of his own motion.

Mr. King, on the 30th of September, at more than two hundred miles distance from London, notices the language of the London newspapers on the subject of his retreat from Drury Lane Theatre. "One of them allows, that my loss as a performer will be severely felt; but says that neither the public nor proprietors will have cause to regret my absence as a manager. This paragraph I cannot but consider as highly complimentary; for it gives me positive commendation in the line I undertook to fill, and only obliquely censures me for not making the most of a character with which I have never been entrusted."

Mr. King denies that he ever demanded a *thousand* pounds a year, for seven years, in addition to his usual salary as an actor; and handsomely adds, "I have a pleasure in asserting that the quantum of money has *never* been an object of dispute." What he complains of, is the *undefined* nature of his situation, which led him to be called to account by authors for the non-performance of pieces which he never heard of,—to be censured for the non-engagement of actors, with whom he had no power to treat,—and for the paucity of novel entertainment, which it was no part of his province to provide.

"Should any one upon hearing this," says Mr. King, "ask me, 'what was my post at Drury Lane? and if I was not manager, who was?' I should be forced to answer like my friend Atall in the comedy;—to the first, *I don't know*—and to the last, *I can't tell.* I can only once more positively assert, that I was *not manager;* for I had not the power, by any agreement, nor indeed had I the wish, to approve, or reject, any new dramatic work; the liberty of engaging, encouraging, or discharging any one performer,—nor sufficient authority to command the cleaning of a coat, or adding, by way of decoration, a yard of copper lace; both of which, it must be allowed, were often much wanted."

According to his own idea, he was retained by the proprie-

tors merely to execute their orders in the bringing forward novelties of their choice—to be ready to answer any public call upon the stage—to make the best arrangements he could as to the performance of the stock plays, and to teach such young or old performers as might be likely to derive benefit from his observation and long practice.

When he looked forward, the prospect was not cheering. Mr. Smith had given notice that he should retire—Palmer had other pursuits—Parsons, from bad health, had determined to go to the south of France—and Mr. King feared that those most interested would not exert themselves to supply these deficiencies; and that all miscarriages would, by the malevolent, be imputed to him. Thus circumstanced, he sent the proprietors an early and formal notice of his determination to retire at the close of the season.

Then were opened the negotiations I have spoken of—then appointments were made without number, and *some* of them kept. Up to the very opening of the theatre, nothing was settled: the gentleman, who called, always in a hurry, or in a crowd, came to no positive agreement; and the former stage manager, his patience quite exhausted, wrote a letter to one of the proprietors, to inform him, that he relinquished the treaty in all its parts, and to prevent its renewal, he would leave town instantly, which in fact he did in the course of the day. Mr. King closes with a firm reliance that the step he has taken will not forfeit the public favour.

I have no sort of doubt, that the difficulty here felt by the proprietors, was as to the quantity of power to be entrusted. Kemble demanded, no doubt, such a latitude as he deemed essential to his grand objects. King was less peremptory, but yet determined to know his actual authority, and obtain proper credentials from the patentees. The absolute desertion of Mr. King compelled them to accede to the terms of Mr. Kemble, who addressed the public, very shortly after, in explanation of the nature of the task he had undertaken.

"*To the public.*

"I find myself arraigned, by an anonymous writer, as having undertaken the management of Drury Lane Theatre under *humiliating restrictions*. I do assure that writer, and the public, that no humiliation degrades my services to those who do me the honour to employ me; and that the power entrusted to me is perfectly satisfactory to my own feelings, and entirely adequate to the liberal encouragement of poets, of performers, and to the conduct of the whole business of the theatre.

"The public approbation of my humble endeavours in the discharge of my duty will be the constant object of my ambition; and as far as diligence and assiduity are claims to merit, I trust I shall not be found deficient.

"I am happy to add, that I find myself most fairly and ably supported, by the general zeal and exertions of a company of performers so capable of making the stage a source of pleasure and instruction.

"I am, with the greatest deference,
the public's most obliged
and humble servant,
JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE.

"*Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.*
October 10, 1788."

This was the time for "pairs of portraits." Horne Tooke, in the hope that Pitt would one day, as to reform in parliament, fulfil the promises made in his youth, did him some service, at least excited some clamour, by comparing the lives of Pitt and Fox, and those of their fathers, together. The portraits of the situation of the two rival managers, as drawn by themselves, are in opposition equally striking. Mr. Kemble might enter upon his office with some *hopes*, that the steadiness of purpose, which he felt to be in himself, might persuade or compel others to be equally consistent. Still he could not but know the junto of proprietors perfectly well; and his, at all times, profound admiration of Sheridan, could not prevent him from seeing the character which, as a man of business at least, belonged to him through life—deciding at length rapidly and correctly, but needing a Troy siege to secure his attention. He could not but see, too, that indolent or indifferent as he might be, he was still the only patentee who could or would do any thing. In all such concerns, if more than one man came into action, the second must do mischief. In a theatre, a committee can never manage, unless, in the style of the senate to the Roman emperors, the rest only meet to register the absolute decrees of one.

Now, at this time, Sheridan was playing the game of ambition for the very largest stake. In the impeachment of Warren Hastings, he came forward to blaze with a brightness that should eclipse all ancient, as well as modern eloquence. His father had published a rhetorical grammar: the son, in Westminster Hall, was to exemplify the whole art of rhetoric, not so much in the hope of convicting that injured man, Mr. Hastings, (for the managers always knew him to be safe,) but as, in fact, the real puppets of the superior

policy of Mr. Pitt: who having by *his* India bill robbed them of the patronage of India, delivered over the India Company to their persecution, so that he might still hold the East under his protection; while he diverted, by so severe a labour, the talents of opposition from too constant an attention to his own measures as minister. The nabobs, therefore, detested the Opposition for seeking to dry up the streams, that flowed with fortunes to them. The nation saw nothing but personal spleen in the managers, which in its indulgence was to cost them an immense sum of money: and the sole result, a grand theatrical display in the new theatre of Westminster Hall: where months of dry evidence were now and then diversified by a day's eloquence on either side, for the amusement of those, who from right or courtesy had the tickets of admission.

Nor was the impeachment the only subject to draw away the attention of Mr. Sheridan from the theatre. The king's alarming indisposition was itself a circumstance to rivet him to the objects of his party. Their majesties, on Tuesday the 28th of October, had honoured the Countess of Effingham with a morning visit. In the evening the king found himself unwell with a nervous complaint, from which Sir G. Baker thought he might soon recover, but he recommended that his majesty should not come to town. The nation became soon seriously alarmed; and the question arose, upon the ascertainment of the king's condition, called the question of the regency; upon which, in the enforcement of the speculative *right* of the heir-apparent, doctrine repugnant to common sense was affirmed to be the spirit of the British constitution. Mr. Pitt, again, upon this question, conducted himself with a prudence which routed all the forcing claims set up by the Opposition; but the contest was long and arduous, and while the heavier ordnance of the party kept up a constant discharge upon the cabinet, Mr. Sheridan seemed to have assumed to himself the lighter warfare of personal annoyance, and laboured with but indifferent success, though with great address, to irritate the temper of Mr. Pitt. By doing this it was imagined the haughty spirit of the minister might lead him to say something offensive to the illustrious substitute for the sovereign, and render it impossible for him ever to listen to the claims of Mr. Pitt and his colleagues. The leaders of Opposition were considered to be the personal friends of the Prince of Wales; but they were anxious to take security against the change, which power is apt to create in such attachments.

Thus on every side was Mr. Sheridan forcibly drawn from

dramatic objects. For the nightly combats of the House of Commons, the quickness of his mind supplied abundant stores; but the displays upon the India question could not be made without the most elaborate preparation; and though he left the general interest to the zeal and comprehensive grasp of Mr. Burke, yet with Mr. Sheridan's habits it was matter of wonder, how he could render himself master of the knowledge displayed by him on the Begum charge. He was, for the most part, as accurate as eloquent: but if at this distance of time, I were to fix upon a matter of peculiar praise to him, I should celebrate his *urbanity*. In speaking of actions, he characterized them as they seemed to him; but he never spoke as an enemy: he was a prosecutor, never a persecutor; and good taste in him gave the tone to public duty.

For this digression some apology would be necessary did it not account for the necessity that existed for consigning really to Mr. Kemble very considerable authority in the affairs of Drury Lane Theatre. Any very rash and wasteful encouragement of authors was not to be apprehended from his sound taste and predilection for our ancient drama. On the score of embellishment and propriety some sacrifices must be expected from the treasury, but it was hoped that the attraction would compensate the cost; and that, much as had been done by Mrs. Siddons, her powers would not merely keep but increase their attraction, now that every attendant grace was likely to be supplied by the kindred taste and ample power of her brother.

One great object of Mr. Kemble as a manager was a little to curb the desire of the performers to exhibit in great characters, and get them to concur cheerfully in such a cast of plays, as should exhibit the full strength of the company, and do the utmost justice to the conceptions of the poet. He had some difficulty at times in carrying these points; and it would be prejudice to suppose that sometimes he did not give reasonable cause for demur; but generally, I believe, he judged rightly as to the fitness of his dramatic subjects; and I am inclined to think that no time ever displayed an equal propriety in the distribution of the business in a theatre. It may be as well to run over the principal strength, whether serious or comic, which came now under the control of Mr. Kemble.

Messrs. Wroughton, Palmer, Bensley, Aickin, Barrymore, Packer, Parsons, Moody, Dodd, Bannister, jun. Suett, Baddeley, R. Palmer, Lamash, &c. Kelly, Sedgwick, Dignum, &c. And of Ladies: Mrss. Siddons, Ward, Goodall—

Misses Farren, Pope, Mrss. Jordan, Kemble, Hopkins, Crouch, Romanzini, Miss Decamp, &c. &c.

The retirement of Smith had left a variety of parts open to Mr. Kemble, for some, if not all, of which his provincial studies must have sufficiently prepared him. One of these was Cibber's Lord Townley. I say Cibber's, because the pith and marrow of that amazing achievement, the Provoked Husband, may be seen by the books not to have been Vanbrugh's. There is hardly a character in the drama of recent times to which Mr. Kemble was naturally more suited than that of Lord Townley; and indeed it always struck me to be in the highest degree masterly in conception and execution. In his angry expostulation with lady Townley, the sudden change of manner to preserve decorum and even concealment of his intentions before the servant who entered, was one of the happiest points that I remember. But the passage itself is inimitably fine, and must be set before the reader:

"*Lord Town.* This house you sleep no more in! 'Tho' your content might grossly feed upon the dishonour of a husband, yet my desires would starve upon the *features* of a wife——

"*Lady T.* If we had never met, my lord, I had not broke my heart for it! but have a care! I may not, perhaps, be so easily recall'd as you imagine.

"*Lord T.* Recall'd! Who's there?

Enter a Servant,

Desire my sister and Mr. Manly to walk up."

The subtle distinction above upon the mere *features*, of what should be a living soul also of truth and tenderness, was too fine for a mixed audience; but they seemed to be struck as with surprise at the latter point, and deliberately gave it the most sensible applause—for that uncertain criterion of acting often betrays itself to be prevention, not feeling; and I have seen them in ecstacies at some of the very worst speaking, that ever drunkenness and wretched manners could contrive to deliver to a popular assembly.

Bensley's Manly kept fully up to the Townley; and Miss Farren, perhaps, such is poor human nature, seemed in her errors more captivating than in her repentance.

As Mr. Kemble NOW acted Macbeth for the benefit of the HOUSE, it may be proper to observe upon the arrangements made by him for the greater effect of the scene. Among the improvements was the clock striking Two, as the appointed time for the murder of Duncan. That it was so, is proved afterwards in the perturbed sleep of Lady Macbeth. It is

more awful and alarming, thus to startle silence by a deep-toned summoner, than to be brought back into petty life, by the tinkle of a table-bell. This, to be sure, dismisses the direction to the servant, as a mere excuse for his delaying yet to retire—

> "Go, bid thy mistress, when my DRINK is ready,
> She strike upon the bell."

"Alas! HE takes no drink!" It is moreover a better *coup de theatre*, as the French call such things; but it never suggested itself to Shakspeare. In the folio 1623, (printed at farthest from a transcription of the original manuscript, for in quarto Macbeth never had appeared,) the stage or prompter's directing, is "*a bell rings.*" Had the preferable thought occurred to the author, it would have been as easy to write, *the clock strikes two.* It is so noted, be it remembered, in the play of Cymbeline, where we read, in this same folio, "*Clocke strikes,*" and Iachimo counts it—

> "One! two, three! — Time, time."

Next there was no music at the sinking of the caldron was certainly not an improvement. Music was as much an essential to such things as the veneficial instruments of the witches; besides, music is directed by Shakspeare; and such a dance as these beings can perform is also ordered in the margin. Some points were noted by a gentleman of admirable taste, whom I have the honour to call my friend, in the delivery of which Garrick achieved what Kemble did not touch at all—these were, first, to Duncan,—

> "The service and the loyalty I owe, &c."

where his homage was delightfully rendered, and secured in the sovereign's breast an '*absolute trust.*' The soliloquy preceding the murder, where Garrick's eye was absolute fascination, as he pursued the imaginary dagger. I always myself thought my friend Kemble here too explosive, too much in action;—but compared with Mr. Garrick, he had a larger space to fill. Yet it is difficult to conceive a finer eye than Kemble's. Garrick was more impressive and harmonious, too, in the address to the witches at the pit of Acheron—

> "I conjure you, by that which you profess,
> (Howe'er you come to know it,) answer me!
> Though you untie the winds, &c."

Mr. Kemble, perhaps from having a weaker organ, never made any thing of this sublime invocation. Yet it is in my judgment essential, every word of it, as impressive of awe for the powers of mischief whom he invokes, and alarm for the condition of that miserable being, whose fancy can teem with such variety of wretchedness "even till destruction sicken." He at last decided to omit the whole series of consequences, and cut the speech down flatly to—

> "Howe'er you come to know it, answer me
> To what I ask you."

The impatient *gods* alone could thank him for the omission. They arrived sooner at the *armed head*—the *bloody child*, and the *infant crowned* with a tree in his hand; and, best of all, the *eight kings* in succession, followed by the triumphant Banquo,

> "Who points at them for *his*."

As, at the time I am speaking of, Mrs. Siddons had never read in public the language of the witches, there was then an excuse, which cannot be made now, if their effect is not even sublime. James Aickin, to his honour, showed that he felt much of it: Moody was drowsy, and Burton silly.

The music of Matthew Locke in this tragedy has crowded the stage with people to sing it; and in the crowd beauty, formerly and since, forced its way into notice. The Witch of the lovely Crouch wore a fancy hat, powdered hair, rouge, point lace, and fine linen enough to enchant the spectator. Perhaps in her vindication it may be allowed, that in so enormous a rabble, one invariable squalidness of attire would be merely disgusting. Among the mingling black, white, red, and grey spirits some may be imagined fantastic enough to assume the garb of beauty, as in all probability many must possess the features. Let it be remembered that in the ancient traditions of the fallen spirits, one of them, Azazel, having corrupted Naàmah, and continuing impenitent, still presides over the toilets of the women. It is difficult to feel the severity of such a punishment. Besides, I know not why the stage should refuse those aids of elegance and fancy, which that inimitable artist Sir Joshua Reynolds introduced, in this very caldron scene in Macbeth, and the still bolder imagination of Fuseli constantly displayed when dressing the gay creatures of the element, that "live in the colours of the rainbow." The group did not consist entirely of witches—spirits of the four elements mingled in the incantations.

Mrs. Siddons in Lady Macbeth then gave the finished sketch, as painters term it, of the grand and terrible impersonation, which some years after she fully *made out*. I do not know whether her dazzling beauty at this period did not injure the effect of her performance. That BEAUTY and TRUTH are *one* is so pleasing a principle, that atrocious cruelty, when coupled with personal loveliness, begets incredulity; and the act, to the spectator, wears the appearance of moral impossibility.

"AMBITION should be made of *sterner* stuff."

At no period of his life did Mr. Kemble ever make so various a display of his talents as the present. He acted Leon in the Rule a Wife, a part in which his strongly contrasted manner always amused me highly. On the 11th of November he performed Sciolto, which Rowe's versification has taken especial care should never be rightly pronounced (in reality it is a word of two syllables, Shŏlto;) but the good Sci-ólto must continue to torture Italian ears for ever, or some little shorter period, to which the Fair Penitent must I think certainly extend. Utterly unlike every thing which had preceded him, Mr. Kemble rendered the stern principle of the father absolutely sublime. On the very next night he acted Maribel, in the Way of the World, and he certainly stood well in the place of Smith; but the house was thin, though Miss Farren graced her own Millamant. In a few days followed his Romeo; but youthful love I think was never well expressed by Kemble: the thoughtful strength of his features was at variance with juvenile passion; where love had grown into habit, and become the master of his existence, and reason had ratified passion, he had no equal; who ever could express like him the fevered affection of Octavian, or the daring devotedness of Rolla? It would scarcely be exaggeration, to call his heart-felt exhibition of these characters "the triumph of woman." I mean by this expression, the praise of that sex, which can subdue natures thus noble, and inspire noble natures with such exalted feelings and purposes. But a most important revival indeed awaits us.

Dr. Johnson, the reader will recollect, pointed out Queen Katharine in Henry VIII. to the particular attention of Mrs. Siddons: and notwithstanding the indecent sneer, implied in the following quotation, by the late George Steevens,

> Quid valet, ad surdas si cantet Phemius aures?
> Quid cœcum Thamyran picta tabella juvat—

I incline to think that Dr. Johnson, by the side of his dear friend Sir Joshua, in the ochestra of Drury Lane Theatre, might formerly have derived very considerable pleasure from such an admirable performance. He had in his own house gazed upon the expressive countenance of Mrs. Siddons; and her majestic utterance would in his fancy have easily supplied the corresponding graces of her movement and gesture. I will venture to say, that one who was not born blind, if he heard the great actress exclaim "Lord Cardinal!" remarked the pause that ensued; and the emphasis in what followed it—

"To YOU I speak;"

would have had immediately pictured in his mind, the indignant and energetic attitude she assumed; have seen the scorn that fluttered upon her lip; and the lightning of her eye, that waited but the approach of Wolsey, to wither up his hypocrisy.

Mr. Kemble had resolved to bring out the play, with all the advantage that could be given to it by his researches of every sort, so as in fact to become, what it was, the nearest thing to reality that imitation ever achieved. He gave Henry himself to Palmer, who played it admirably. Mr. Bensley was in possession of the part of Wolsey, and from old feelings of respect for that gentleman, Kemble could not think of disturbing him. He knew besides that his sister, in some of the heavier scenes of the Queen, would need a duteous and intelligent observance—that she would require, in the language of our poet's Cleopatra on the Cydnus, those who

"tended her i' the EYES,
And made their bends adornings."

Here, therefore, he combined the two characters of Cromwell and Griffith, and himself performed this faithful servant, of Wolsey first, and afterwards of Queen Katharine. I can only say that, while he kept this character, it was an enchanting exhibition of humility, affection, and reverence; it suggested every proper feeling for the personages about whom it was occupied, and neither Wolsey would have been so striking, nor Katharine so affecting, without the "well played passion" of Cromwell.

However, in the course of the season, Mr. Bensley, on account of his health, being obliged to go to Bath, Mr. Kemble found it absolutely necessary to prepare himself for Wolsey; and at that time evinced great discernment of the character,

which in powerful contrast yields to no dramatic exhibition whatever. But when he came afterwards to study the part more profoundly, and to take in all the collateral aids derived from Cavendish and Fiddes, he spoke to me of the *rawness* of his first performance; as indeed he was entitled to do, from the elaboration which, at Covent Garden Theatre, rendered his Wolsey one of the most affecting moral lessons on the stage. I shall, therefore, myself decline here to touch upon the prominent points, and consider him for the present merely as the Cromwell of the drama. And indeed it would have been well if the critics of that day had also abstained from some exemplifications of his errors. One of them told him that, in the passage "poor, weak man, the image of his Maker," Mr. Kemble should have laid the stress upon the epithets *poor* and *weak;* and I dare say it will at first appear singular that he did not do so. But a little knowledge of critical hurry leads me to observe merely, that no stress could be laid on these epithets by the actor, for the best of all reasons—they are not in the part. Witness the passage:

> "Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition;
> By that sin fell the angels; how can man then,
> The image of his Maker, hope to win by't?"

The processions in which this play particularly abounds, afforded great scope for the knowledge of ancient habits and manners which Mr. Kemble had acquired; and that study of the picturesque, by which Shakspeare himself, quite as much as by any other quality, transcended all other writers for the stage. Mr. Kemble arranged these exhibitions with punctilious exactness; and having himself to sustain a character not very much occupied in the play, he gave his attention, when it was needed throughout: until all raw material was worked into the smoothness of graceful habit. He had employed his pen, too, in alterations.

On the 28th of November, after he had given a very excellent performance of Hastings, in Jane Shore, an alteration from Bickerstaff by Mr. Kemble, called The Pannel, added to the attractions of Mrs. Jordan. The piece was originally Spanish, and has all the delightful bustle of the plots of Calderon. It may be a question, whether more laughter was ever excited in a theatre, than by the great comic actress in the character of Beatrice. Her *gown* was never mentioned without convulsing the audience.

He added to his range of characters, on the 9th of December, the performance of young Norval, in Home's tragedy of Douglas. In the contest with Glenalvon, Kemble rose to

the most consummate excellence. It was remarked, on this occasion, that his sister astonished even those best acquainted with her Lady Randolph—it was a noble contest for pre-eminence. Perhaps, too, the acting with her *brother*, in the agonizing fifth act, allowed a freer course to the feelings of the actress. There is always some reserve in a woman of delicacy towards a mere representative relation.

I will not interrupt the narrative of that great display which Kemble made of himself this season: other matters shall form a supplement. On the 19th of January, 1789, he performed Zanga, in the Revenge, and in the truly great scene with Alonzo in the fifth act, towered above himself. Yet the vast explosion upon the words "*'Twas I!*" however answered by the applause of the audience, was but mere noise, compared with the sensibility as to the *blow* throughout, and the dismission of enmity at the offender's death—

"A lion preys not upon carcasses."

But he turned to Shakspeare once more this season for striking effect, and produced Coriolanus, with a few additions from Thomson—I mean nearly in the state in which the play was left by old Sheridan in the year 1755, when he himself acted the haughty patrician at Covent Garden Theatre. I do not pretend that, at the first production, either Kemble or Mrs. Siddons achieved the fame subsequently attached to their performance of Coriolanus and Volumnia. By a course of peculiar study, antiquity became better known to Mrs. Siddons; and Mr. Kemble also grew more completely Roman. Mrs. Damer had led her friends into admiration of the forms which she had modelled; and I presume it was from the display of that lady's talent, that the great actress became attached to the same pursuit. The application to statuary is always the study of the antique. It soon became apparent, that Mrs. Siddons was conversant with drapery more dignified than the shifting robes of fashion; and in truth her action also occasionally reminded the spectator of classic models. She had not derived this from any foreign theatres, for she had then seen none. Her attention to sculpture accounts for it satisfactorily.

As to Mr. Kemble, though he never handled the pencil, he had a great affection for the art, and well understood how far it could be serviceable to his own. In our morning walks together, we called upon the artists to whom we were alike known, and viewed the progress of their works, whether of history or portrait, with sincere satisfaction. Mr. Kemble's

politeness and modesty at such times rendered him a welcome visitor; and the silence that invades every body, I think, in a gallery of pictures, was seldom broken by my friend, who usually reserved all remarks until we had taken our leave. The mention of this circumstance brings affectingly to my recollection the many, many hours I have enjoyed of his unreserved communication, and the steadiness of his friendship at all times—I am obliged to quit the subject abruptly.

Mr. Kemble this season fully developed his system as a manager: it was that of good sense and fine taste. He had thoroughly estimated the genius of his contemporaries, and might, with modesty, think himself "as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of them." Without proscribing new efforts, he did not court them, and certainly expected from them nothing that could bear the neighbourhood of Shakspeare. The earth-born spirits, therefore, were kept at proper distance and in due subordination; and imitating the wisdom of Copernicus, he placed our dramatic sun in the centre of the system.

CHAP. II.

Other novelties of Kemble's first season as manager.—Mrs. Goodall in Rosalind.—Mrs. Jordan also acts that character.—Her Nell.—Corinna.—Lady Bell.—Her Foible.—New pieces, Cumberland, Cobb, Mrs. Inchbald.—The Prophet.—Rd. Bentley.—O'Keefe.—Aladdin.—St. John's Mary Queen of Scots.—General Conway.—Richmond House theatricals.—The king's recovery.—The queen's first drawing-room.—Author's tribute to her majesty's excellence.—She appears at Covent Garden Theatre.—Mrs. Siddons in Juliet.—Reynolds, his dramatist.—Mr. Macklin.—The Author's knowledge of him.—Burning of the Opera House.—Talents that had been displayed in it.—Its visitors.—Manchester Theatre burnt.—Mr. Kemble, with Mr. Aicken, takes the Liverpool House.—The opening prologue.—Mr. Kemble's Tragedy.—His Macchiavel.—Mrs. Inchbald's Married Man.—Mr. Colman's Battle of Hexham.—Pleasantry of the author.

When I decided not to break the series of Mr. Kemble's performances, I promised a supplement as to the other novelties of the season of 1788-9. They were so numerous, that the mention of them must necessarily be as brief, as consists with my design of combining, with the life of its great ornament, the view of the stage itself during that life.

Mrs. Goodall, from the Bath Theatre, made her first appearance at Drury Lane on the 2d October, 1788, in Rosalind. She gave no unsuitable impression of the character, if it be limited to Oliver's phrase from Orlando's mouth, "the shepherd youth whom he, in sport, doth call his Rosalind." The elevated mind of this rival of Grecian beauties, as it displayed itself either in exquisite sensibility or exquisite humour, resided only in the breast or brain, which-ever may claim the perfections, of Mrs. Siddons.

With respect to a greater essential with vulgar audiences, the *figure* of Mrs. Goodall, in the male habit, was more decidedly deceptive than any other, which the spirit of travesty has displayed, in the persons of Miss Walpole, Mrs. Jordan, Madame Hilligsberg, and Miss Tree. How far the assurance, shrouded under this dress, could be carried, and

with, or without "a pure blush" passed current, Mrs. Jordan fully established on the night of her benefit—but her *laugh* and her *voice* were irresistible. There was the Devil to Pay after it, and her inimitable Nell, to conciliate every body. She added to her stock this season, what was peculiarly happy, Corinna in Vanbrugh's Confederacy; and the part of Lady Bell, in Murphy's Know your own Mind. This was the foible of Mrs. Jordan; but she never could look the woman of fashion. It was a smart soubrette, who had hurried on her lady's finest apparel, and overacted the character to avoid being detected. Her tragedy, too, was insufferable notwithstanding her fine organ.

I have let pass a stroke of undesigned severity, in mentioning the performers before the authors of novelties; but Mr. Cumberland supplied the two houses with a couple of very careless productions, *The Impostor*, at Drury Lane, a sort of Beaux Stratagem; and the *School for Widows*, at Covent Garden, open only three nights, and forsaken the second.

Cobb had done great service at Drury Lane, on various occasions, and his *Doctor and Apothecary*, besides making known the whim and tact of its author, introduced to the British public the musical talents of Stephen Storace, who, shortly after, in the Haunted Tower, taught the proper use to be made of the Italian opera.

Mrs. Inchbald, always assiduous to serve her friend Mr. Harris, gave him a valuable four-act piece from the Zelie of Madame de Genlis, called the *Child of Nature*. It will always charm in the hands of any lovely and sensible young actress, such as Miss Brunton was, when she acted Amanthis. It is now, I believe, cut into fewer acts than four; but in comedy to have fewer than the usual *five*, indicates deficient business; and the hint of compression once given, is usually followed to a degree, that renders the fable unintelligible.

A fortnight afterwards, Mr. Harris produced a comic opera, called the Prophet, which had, perhaps, formed one of the day-dreams of Richard Bentley, the great critic's son; and who had employed his pencil, at times, at the suggestion of Walpole, and for the embellishment of Gray. Poor Bentley had died in 1782, and left the Prophet among his papers. But, living or dead, he was fated to be unsuccessful; and the Prophet, after a short struggle, sunk "to endless night." Could Bentley have been contented to seek any thing by the common road to it, he had power of mind to have achieved, by common industry, very desirable success; but he flew off after some crochet of the brain, and rendered his talent unsuitable, and his friends useless. The stage has had to

display, however, in their turn, models of perseverance in a given track -- men who, without positive genius and with slender knowledge, have acquired the rewards, if not the honours, of the drama. It is even dangerous to THINK *above* the mind of your audience.

O'Keefe was in no danger of the sort just hinted and his comedy of the *Toy* met with ample success. It is included by him in the collection of his works, though it was suspected to be little more than Pilon's unfinished *Ward in Chancery*. Managers have many opportunities of this sort, and frequently a plot dramatic, as well as political, could it change hands, would succeed.

ALADDIN, or the *Lamp*, which has been a wonder in the present days, was no slight pantomimic attraction in the Christmas time of the year 1788. The story was followed only through three scenes, and then, as might be expected, and indeed desired, the Sieur Delpini, relieved from Probationary Odes, had it all to himself.

The Honourable John St. John had ventured to compose a tragedy upon the subject of Mary, Queen of Scots, and Kemble and Mrs. Siddons condescended to act the parts of Norfolk and the Queen. But versifying the descriptions of Robertson, and thinking without a *catholic* mind, and with no enthusiasm, either for Mary or ancient times, will do nothing in this drama. There can be no sort of doubt as to the philosophic candour, and the beautiful language that distinguish both Hume and Robertson. But the rudest chronicler of past ages is infinitely better suited to the dramatic poet. HE wants a fulness of statement, because he must not only know events in their abstract; he requires *detail*, to put the scene before you; and the more passion and prejudice and peculiar manners, the Chronicler notes, the better his chance of holding up the dramatic mirror to actual nature. How would even Shakspeare have invented the arguments for Henry's invasion of France, or the inimitable address of Queen Katharine, on her trial, first written by a man who actually heard her majesty deliver it? The lapse of time, too, begets ignorance of manners; and the nearer the record to the fact, the greater the likeness to the action; or to what people *then* thought of it; and this is every thing to the stage-poet.

General Conway's False Appearances, I only notice, because its attraction at Richmond House transferred it with undiminished effect to the regular stage. When I say this I, in course remember, that the *private* theatrical was sustained by Lord Henry Fitzgerald, Lord Derby, Captain Merry; the Hon. Mrs. Damer, and Miss Hamilton. At one of these

exhibitions at Richmond House, the play was Lee's Theodosius; and Miss Hamilton sang the very last air composed by Sacchini. The reason of noticing it in this place is to preserve the words written to that air by Mrs. Piozzi. They will at all events convert digression into beauty.

SONG—By Miss Hamilton.

"Vain 's the breath of adulation,
Vain the tears of tenderest passion,
While a strong imagination
Holds the wandering mind away!

Art in vain attempts to borrow
Notes, to sooth a rooted sorrow:
Fix'd to die—and die to-morrow,
What can touch her soul to-day?"

Miss Farren, I believe, used to look on at these rehearsals; and the dresses worn by Mrs. Damer were refined models of decoration, frequently suggested both by herself and Mrs. Siddons. And I may be permitted to ask what could equal such an amusement in the circle of fashion, limiting its indulgence strictly to their own rank? It required talent, and it displayed it in the eye of majesty itself. By these entertainments an attempt was made to revive the *gothic* triumphs in the courts of James and Charles, and something was enjoyed beyond a concert or a crowd!

Mrs. Siddons this season, at her first benefit, employed her skill upon captain Jephson's *Law of Lombardy*. It is certainly the least attractive of his tragedies. She even acted in the farce for the amusement of her friends; and tried the effect of the fine lady in Garrick's Lethe. But the manners of the former fine lady were forgotten. It is often to be regretted that temporary pleasantries cannot be adapted to fluctuating life; and when they are ingenious like Lethe, remain stock-pieces for a century.

In a former chapter of this work, I was under a necessity of noticing the king's most afflicting indisposition, and the political struggle in which Mr. Pitt maintained a position the most dignified and extraordinary that any minister ever assumed. The stage, during the few months of his majesty's calamitous depression, sympathized in every proper way with the national feeling. The admirable supplication, "God save the king," was demanded usually by the audience, and sung by the whole house with the deepest reverence. At length the hopes of all good men were realised, and on the 26th of February every symptom of the royal complaint had

vanished. The minister received the great reward of his steadiness in the approbation of his majesty, and a triumph that resounded through the nation obliterated in a moment the former fierce struggles of party.

On such an event much splendour might be looked for at court, and the queen's first drawing room was a display somewhat theatrical. I shall, in such a view, insert a short notice of it. Before an assemblage of all that was noble in birth, or gay or beautiful in higher life, her majesty, on the 26th of March, 1789, appeared, to receive congratulations upon the greatest event of her existence.

The queen sat on this occasion in a chair of state, under a magnificent canopy, attended by her household. She was a perfect blaze of diamonds, disposed with every possible application to the circumstances that had occurred. The sentiment which seemed to be impressed by the display, was unbounded exultation, that, under Providence, she had been enabled to discharge the high duties of her great and difficult position.

Round the queen's neck was a medallion, tied with a double row of gold chain, and across her shoulders was another chain of pearls in three rows; but the portrait of the king was suspended from five rows of diamonds fastened low upon the dress behind, and streaming over her person with the most gorgeous effect. The tippet was of fine lace, fastened with the letter G in brilliants of immense value. In the front of her majesty's hair, in letters formed by diamonds, were easily legible the words "God save the king." The princesses were splendidly, but not equally, adorned. The female nobility wore emblematical designs beautifully painted on the satin of their caps, and fancy teemed with the inventions of loyalty and joy. At half after six o'clock her majesty quitted the drawing-room for duties still more interesting.

Upon the present occasion I cannot close the subject without expressing the full conviction of my understanding and my heart, that a more glorious being than the consort of George the Third never existed. I have lived to see a miserable delusion withdraw some part of the affection of the multitude for a time; but she was in truth the idol of the people, and they paid to her that sort of homage, as if in her person they were reverencing the form of VIRTUE itself.

The king's health being completely re-established, the queen made her first appearance before the public on the 15th of April, 1789, by coming to Covent Garden Theatre in state; accompanied by three of the princesses—the princess royal,

Augusta, and Elizabeth. Her majesty entered the royal box alone; the princesses not being for a few minutes ready. On the appearance of the queen, a shout arose of transport from the spectators—the curtain ran up and displayed a transparency, which had the words in striking letters *long live the king*—and *may the king live for ever*. For all this no preparation could be sufficient, and tears fortunately came to her relief. In this state she paid her compliments to her people. On the entrance of the princesses, the emotion somewhat subsided—

> "It seem'd she was a queen
> Over her passion; who, most rebel-like,
> Sought to be king o'er her."

To talk of any common occurrences after this reception would be idle indeed; and the entertainments of the evening were quite common trash, without the slightest bearing upon the event—viz. *He would be a Soldier*—and *Aladdin!* There was no better taste on the stage than to have the king's health given by Edwin, the far greater Liston of that time.

I cannot but hope that his majesty read none of the poetry written and recited upon the occasion. The ode was the prevalent form, and the general expression either feeble and flat, or bombastic and unintelligible. Mrs. Siddons, I remember, recited some lumber of the latter kind in public, at one of the clubs; and also on the night of her second benefit, after her performance of Juliet, but the poems had been destined to the vault of the Capulets. As to the Juliet, it was exactly what might have been anticipated—too dignified and thoughtful to assume the childish ardours of a first affection; but, as the serious interest grew upon the character, impassioned, terrific, and sublime. When I gave this as the general impression from her performance, I should, as to the early scenes, say that perhaps the language of Juliet was never so well given; and it was only by contrasting the form and its mature energy with the sentiments she uttered, that suggested the fit and the unfit, and the division to be made by the critic between the former and latter part of the character. Under the direction of Mr. Garrick, the performers of Juliet had been made to feel or seize every salient point of the character, and it will not therefore be astonishing, that great and original as the genius was that Mrs. Siddons brought to the study of the part, she left fewer of her *marks* upon it, than she did upon any other character of equal force. In this observation I have in view the beauties which she *alone*

struck out in Imogen, in Ophelia, in Desdemona, and in the Isabel of Shakspeare's Measure for Measure, with the never-to-be equalled charm in which she invested his Rosalind.

During the autumn of 1788, the Dramatist, a first comedy by Mr. Reynolds, had solicited in vain the judgment of Mr. Harris. As a last resource it was tendered for the benefit of Mrs. Wells; and Lewis, not as having any hopes from the hero, but as a mark of kindness to the fair beneficiary, condescended to accept the part of Vapid, provided he might speak as much as he liked of it, and speak it but once. On the 15th of May, therefore he delighted the town, to his own astonishment, with a character, which he played all his acting life, and at his death left in full possession of the stage.

The excellent Mrs. Piozzi used to give, as an instance of the danger of *irony*, the character of Cumberland in Goldsmith's Retaliation; which had, by all who did not know the doctor, been taken for serious commendation. He drew the characters which were to mend the *hearts* of the community, not from his contemporaries, but *himself*. However this might be as to the "Terence of England," Reynolds certainly drew from himself the passion for dramatic situation and effect displayed by his hero; for he had literally made up his mind to persevere through all obstruction and discouragement, and be a dramatic author, or NOTHING.

From thinking unfavourably of the new author, the theatre suddenly turned even to thinking about his *interest;* and the hazardous expedient was resorted to, of interrupting the run of the comedy for the few nights belonging to the house at the close of the present season, that it might begin a race of fame with the ensuing, and run, if it could run so long, to the end of it. In an age of imitation, when, as to the drama, the best authors we had did little more, as they have done little since, than copy from the French stage: it might have been expected, that our young poet would have sketched his stage mania from the *metromanie* of Piron. But our pleasant friend assured me himself, very recently, that *then* he had never read it. While he had the whim, the sparkling hilarity of William Lewis to identify his gay heroes, he constantly produced his very seasonable efforts; indeed, a steady friendship ensued between these sons of mirth; and at his death, Reynolds became, with Mr. Const, the guardian of his children, and executor to his will. Few things are more honourable to human character, than such marks of implicit trust: and though there are some striking instances, at times, of a depraved son insulting the judgment of his father, by his conduct to such friends, the heirs of Mr. Lewis retain an hereditary esteem for the executors of their father.

I have now to record the close of Macklin as an actor. Mr. Harris had for some time given this extraordinary man opportunities of delighting the present age by what originated in the past, and on the 7th of May he attempted his own character, Shylock; but memory having failed him altogether, Ryder finished the part. There had been lapses of memory before, and he had said that should they recur, he would withdraw. As I paid much attention to Macklin's performances, and personally knew him, I shall endeavour to characterize his acting, and discriminate it from that of others. If Macklin really was of the old school, that school taught what was truth and nature. His acting was essentially manly—there was nothing of trick about it. His delivery was more level than modern speaking, but certainly more weighty, direct and emphatic. His features were rigid, his eye cold and colourless; yet the earnestness of his manner, and the sterling sense of his address, produced an effect in Shylock, that has remained to the present hour unrivalled. Macklin, for instance, in the trial scene, "stood like a TOWER," as Milton has it. He was "not bound to *please*" any body by his pleading; he claimed a right, grounded upon LAW, and thought himself as firm as the Rialto. To this remark it may be said, "You are here describing SHYLOCK:" True; I am describing Macklin. If this perfection be true of him, when speaking the language of Shakspeare, it is equally so, when he gave utterance to his own. Macklin was the author of *Love à la Mode* and the *Man of the World*. His performance of the two *true born Scotsmen* was so perfect, as though he had been created expressly to keep up the prejudice against Scotland. The late George Cook was a noisy Sir Pertinax compared with Macklin. He talked of *booing*, but it was evident he took a credit for supleness that was not in him. He was rather Sir Giles than Sir Pertinax. Macklin could inveigle as well as subdue; and modulated his voice, almost to his last year, with amazing skill.

In society, the old gentleman partook of the positive dogmatic style, that I presume to have originated with Quin. Authoritative and overbearing, he seemed to think that age could never be in the wrong, and youth never in the right.

Macklin at least never could bring himself to the conclusion to which Dr. Johnson came, who said to Mrs. Piozzi, "In disputes betwixt the old and the young, the young fellow, madam, is in the right nine times out of twelve—I believe I might almost say nine times out of ten." It could only have been in the contemplation of such samples of age

as Macklin, that Dr. Johnson formed an opinion so irreverent, and, I yet hope, unfounded.

Macklin once disputed with me upon the Paradise Lost, when he took a sentence of exclamation for a simple interrogatory; but where, in reading Milton, he gave only what long habit had settled upon his organs, without any recent effort of the understanding, he proved how minutely he could *once* inquire into meaning, and how forcibly and even beautifully he could render his conceptions. In reciting the exordium of the Paradise Lost, there was a masterly instance of his feeling and propriety, in a slight suspension of the voice before he uttered the word *forbidden;* and the latter syllables rather lingered out, despondingly.—

> "Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that FOR-BIDD-EN tree,"—

The awful regret, which trembled upon the word, formed the suitable forerunner "to the great amiss"

> "Whose mortal taste
> Brought DEATH into the world, and ALL our WO."

It has been commonly considered that Garrick introduced a mighty change in stage delivery: that actors had never, until his time, been natural. If Macklin at all resembled *his* masters, as it is probable he did, they can certainly not be obnoxious to a censure of this kind. He abhorred all trick, all start and ingenious attitude; and his attacks upon Mr. Garrick were always directed to the restless abundance of his action and his gestures, by which, he said, rather than by the fair business of the character, he caught and detained all attention to himself.

I took that opportunity to observe upon the elegant, but somewhat painful, attitude into which most Hamlets throw themselves, upon the appearance of the Ghost—"Sir, it is unnatural, and a mere stage trick." Upon being requested to show me, how HE in Hamlet would first receive the spirit of his father? He said, "Remember, sir, to give me the cues." And then with indifference, a little sarcastical, repeated—

> "The King doth wake to night and takes his rouse, &c.
> HOR. Is it a custom?
> HAM. Ay, marry, is it:
> But to my mind,—though I am native here,
> And to the manner born—it is a custom
> More honour'd in the breach, than the observance.
> HOR. Look, my Lord, it comes!"

MACKLIN, here, with a sudden spring of the shoulders, and a slight throwing back of the body, the arms pointing downwards, and the fingers flying open,—in a breathless, scarcely audible tone, pronounced the ejaculation—

"Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!"

"From ALL surprise, it is not to be expected, that even Hamlet should be guarded; but always recollect, sir, that he *came* there, to see his father's spirit."

With respect to the alleged unfairness of Garrick in engrossing all attention to himself, a charge often repeated, it may, perhaps, be true, that this great master converged the interest of the whole too much about his particular character; and willingly dispensed with any rival attraction, not because he shunned competition with it as *skill*, but because it might encroach upon, delay, or divide that palm for which he laboured—public applause.

Macklin, when he did not intend to be rude, had in conversation a mode of saying tart things in the language of compliment. One of these macsarcasms he played off upon Mr. Kemble. "Sir," said he, "I have known your family from generation to generation. I have seen YOU act, young man; and I have seen your father, sir;—and I have seen your grandfather, sir. Sir, he was a great actor, he could make much out of a little. There was Jupiter—Sir; in JUPITER, Dryden himself was not fuller of the God than he was: and in LAERTES, sir, he was the only Laertes that I ever saw—no; there never was a Hamlet that could stand near him." Kemble heard this *persiflage* with a smile, and told the story in a singularly fine imitation of Macklin's manner. "But these ancestral honours of mine," he added, "Mr. Macklin certainly did *not* find in Ovid."

Nam mihi LAERTES pater est—Arcesius illi—
JUPITER huic—neque in his quisquam DAMNATUS et exsul!

I am now to speak of one of those casualties with which we were soon to be familiar, and indeed expect, in dreadful succession; I mean the burning of the Opera-House, in the Haymarket. On the 17th of June, 1789, I was on my return from a visit, crossing the Park from Buckingham Gate, to Stable Yard, St. James's when this most tremendous conflagration burst upon me; it seemed to make the long lines of trees in the Mall wave in an atmosphere of fire. As I approached the spot, the consternation appeared to settle nearly in the

eyes—little motion in the crowd; all gaze, all wonder. The fire had commenced in the flies, and burst through the roof in a column of confirmed fierceness, that evinced its strength to have been irresistible, even when it was first perceived. In the theatre, about ten o'clock, they had been rehearsing a ballet, and the first alarm was occasioned by the sparks of fire which fell upon the heads of the dancers. Madame Ravelli was with difficulty saved by one of the firemen; Madame Guimard lost a slipper, but escaped in safety. Little or nothing was saved of the property in the theatre, and a perhaps moderate estimate computed the loss at £70,000.

This was the theatre built by Sir John Vanbrugh, and finished in 1706. From some inattention to the doctrine of acoustics, the house, at first, was ill suited to "the purpose of playing." Its well-like properties produced such undulations of the voice, that, until the roof was lowered, all articulation on the stage came indistinctly to the ear. It was a grand palatial structure, and bore the usual evidences of Vanbrugh, not as a poet, but architect;—heaviness and dignity—projection and force.*

A descendant of Sir John Vanbrugh enjoyed £800 per year from this property; and the late king, in consideration for this gentleman, had interfered to prevent a new opera-house from being erected on another spot. In Market Lane, five houses were burnt, and the stables of the White Horse Inn. The night was so still and calm, that the contiguous houses in Pall Mall were saved. I saw Mr. Burke standing close to the scene, seemingly delighting in the energy and skill, with which the Bridewell boys served their first-rate engine, in the place of honour; that is, of greatest peril. At Carleton House, the proper vigilance was used to avert danger from the showers of fire, which were falling through the night. The supply of water could have been but scanty, for at twelve o'clock of the following day, the fire was, at the back of the opera-house, burning like a furnace. It was, at the time, considered to be the work of some diabolical malice;

* As a musical structure, nothing can exceed the present Opera-House, by Novosielski. Let it be remembered, too, that this ingenious foreigner gave the front of that magnificent mansion, in Piccadilly, once inhabited by the Emperor Alexander, and now completing by the exact taste of the Marquis of Hertford. The depth and beauty of Novosielski's enrichments in this front will strike the man of taste, as he passes, with some astonishment, that what is so true and so superior, is yet so little imitated in more modern structures. Lord Hertford keeps it as Novosielski left it, except as to the door, which is plain and simple agreeably to the present taste for entrances.

and a death-bed confession was once repeated to me, that revealed the name of the incendiary.

It may be expected that the sudden stop put to this refined amusement among us, should call for some record of the talents, which had previously illustrated the Italian Opera; and I willingly preserve the impressions which they have left upon my mind. In my youth I had began the study of music as a treble, in an amateur society of some celebrity. I was well grounded in our great cathedral harmonists, and consequently was not meanly qualified to enjoy the splendid fancy of the Italian composers. The band was led by Cramer, whose firm tone and unbending truth of style claim my utmost respect. Sir John Gallini, in the engagements of performers, had been somewhat cautious. He had allowed the Soprano Pacchierotti to escape him, but he had engaged Signor Marchesi, and the highest hopes were entertained by those who had heard him in Italy.

The appearance of such a singer as Marchesi was of great importance in a musical sense. Serious opera must decline, if not supported on the plan of its composition. If the chief male have a Soprano part assigned him by the composer, it is of no use to prattle about manliness, *such* creatures, and so forth. The usual recourse since has been either transposition, or consigning the hero to a female, and in consequence the effect is beyond measure weakened. Marchesi, though not so affecting as Pacchierotti, nor so sweet as Rubinelli, had a compass that extended through three octaves, and scarcely any of these notes were weak or uncertain. The trick called the semitonal run, he really executed with distinctness. At first landing among us, he laboured to astonish rather than delight. This pervaded the whole of his first Opera Giulio Sabino, a work of Sarti, and brought out under the direction of Mazzinghi. In the Olympiade and others, he at length more powerfully controlled the affections, and was in all senses a great master of his art. Signora Giuliani, who was his first woman, after the previous studies of the Conservatore, had been under the tuition of the accomplished Pacchierotti: she was never great; but always agreeable and true.

We had not been accustomed to hear the quality of voice, possessed by Marchesi, proceed from a well formed person; and never had it been accompanied with heroic action. The manner of Marchesi was so built upon the antique, that he constantly reminded you of Grecian sculpture; or something rather more delicate, the forms of antiquity designed by Angelica Kauffman. His refined manners gave him the entrée

to our families of distinguished rank, and there were few among the female nobility, who did not take lessons from Marchesi.

They who remember the *full* power of Morelli's voice, and the gaiety of Storace in the operas of Paesiello and Cimarosa, will readily conceive that the Opera Buffa was a source of great entertainment;—for Morelli, in addition to a depth of tone perfectly astonishing, and at least great *practical* knowledge of musical effect, was an actor such as the Italian stage has seldom witnessed. He was, I used to think, in his prime, quite upon a par with Mr. King of Drury Lane Theatre. Like him, he was distinguished for neat articulation, and an unremitting attention to the business of the whole stage. In his solos he took his own course of whim and pleasantry, and was decorous while sportive;—but in the concerted pieces, in the busy *finales* of the opera, he did what every base singer of sense will do, he waited upon the other singers; and poured in the rich support of his grand and manly tones, just where they were wanted, and in the closes your ear caught him rolling along, like

"The sound of thunder heard remote."

Of ballet masters they had the first in the world, Noverre. That admirable artist knew the value of mythology; that it formed the religious code of the ballet. To execute his conceptions, he had that unapproached Vestris, who was fairly termed Le Dieu de la danse, and by whose side Didelot even was poor.—Yet at this time the naïve, the natural Hilligsberg, was a powerful attraction: she had a lovely expression of innocent apprehension or pure festivity, with a wild elastic spring; danced entirely from her feelings; and, unlike our friend in the Tatler, would never have disturbed her lodgings by practising all the hieroglyphics of her book. When she had exhausted her few steps, she used fairly to run away off the stage, and this run of her's had all the beauty without the cruelty of Atalanta's. The Guimard was a dancer of another kind, highly accomplished both as to science and expression. She was under articles with Gallini, at the time of the accident, which it was contended, I remember, were dissolved by the calamity.

The high life assembled in our Opera-house is itself the most captivating of all sights. I cannot say, as Horace does, "O matre pulchra, filia pulchrior," for I do not think the daughters lovelier than their mothers; and, in a multitude of instances, the predecessors of our reigning beauties were of a

grander form, and their deportment was fashioned in a finer school. The exterior was at once stately and gracious. I remember when we waited, as for a triumph, to see the Devonshires or the Rutlands walk down the opera stairs to their carriages. We have one consolation in the undress style of the present time; there may be less display, but there is certainly more comfort. To relieve the purity of British beauty from the hands of the friseur of 1789, very great sacrifices indeed were prudently made. I venture to say that headachs among our ladies cannot be near so prevalent as they were forty years ago.

The very day after the destruction of the Opera-house by fire, namely, on the 18th of June 1789, the Manchester theatre was burnt to the ground.

Mr. Kemble, in conjunction with Mr. Aickin, had now taken the Liverpool theatre. I heard, at the time, that the consideration they were to give was 1200*l.* down, and a rent of 350*l.* per annum.—Of these terms I am no judge whatever; Mr. Kemble opened the theatre himself with an Address by M. P. Andrews, which, like Bottom's Prologue, said or seemed to say, some trash like the following:

> "For me, the new-made monarch, fix'd by fate
> To sway the sceptre of this mimic state,
> May the reign prosper, as desert *shall seem.*"

A "*new-made*" monarch, "*fix'd by fate,*" to prosper as desert "*may seem,*" is a combination of nonsense so exquisite, that it wanted only a proper mouth like Liston's to give it utterance. My friend was commonly more attentive as to what he was to speak, in town or out of it. Indeed it is rather surprising that he consigned the task of opening his theatre to any muse but his own at this time; for he had now seriously invoked the goddess, and had really written the first act of a tragedy upon the subject of atheism, which he once read to me, and I think also read to the Drury-lane company in the green-room. At this distance of time I can only say of it, that the interest opened remarkably well, and that the expression was nervous and exact, like the best manner of Dryden, of whose diction Mr. Kemble was peculiarly fond. As I have heard no more of it, he probably destroyed so much of the book as it occupied. In this casual mention of his literary pursuits, I may be perhaps indulged with another reference to his studies. His copy of Machiavel is now in my library, and he has marked, as intending it for dramatic use, the very powerful speech of the Plebeian in the third book of that author's History of Florence. It is a

manual of revolutionary topics, of which a short taste may suffice. "The enterprise (says our mob orator) is not only easy, but certain; because those who should oppose us, are divided and rich: their divisions will give us the victory, and their riches, when ours, shall maintain it. Let not the antiquity of their blood dismay you, though so insolently asserted. All men, having the same original, are equally ancient, and nature has made no difference in their contexture; strip them naked, you are as well fashioned as they; dress them in your rags, and yourselves in their robes, and you will doubtless be the nobles; for riches or poverty alone it is, that discriminates between you."

One might be tempted to believe that Shakspeare had read this allusion, from a very corrupt passage in the fourth act of his Timon.

> "Raise me this beggar, and denude that lord;
> The senator shall bear contempt hereditary,
> The beggar native honour."

The word *denude* is a conjecture of Dr. Warburton's. It is remarkable that Mr. Steevens would read "*devest* that lord," which led him also unconsciously to the expression of Machiavel. Perhaps it may be thought that he who in one of his plays "had set the murderous Machiavel to school," had been himself occasionally in the school of Machiavel. Mr. Kemble has also marked the character of Cosimo, in the 7th Book, and that of Lorenzo de Medici, in the 8th, probably as models of delineation. I prefer this incidental tracking of his studies to the formality of express dissertation. His acting had every mark about it of severe application. We have now found a much shorter road to perfection.

Mrs. Inchbald was certainly the most assiduous of our modern dramatists. On the 15th of July, her comedy of the *Married Man*, in three acts, was received at Colman's very favourably. It was a contraction of Destouches' Philosophe Marié. Perhaps even Moliere himself has not found greater honour of this sort. Destouches' comedies are commonly cast in one mould. But his scenes sparkle with gay descriptions, and dilemmas neatly wrought. No writer of the French stage better understands the art of playing off an absurdity. A pleasant instance of this sort occurs in the comedy before us: where the philosopher, ashamed of his wedded felicity, has his wife courted to his face by his own friends. The Marquis, having detected his marriage with Melite, describes her ridiculous husband to *himself*, and then exclaims—

Ne le pourriez-vous point connoitre à ce portrait?

ARISTE (*le Philos Marié*)

A-PEU-PRES.

MARQUIS.

Ah! tant mieux, j'en suis fort satisfait, &c.

ARISTE (*seul*)

Suis-je mort ou vivant?

All languages have little idiomatic niceties, that are of vast importance, and defy translation. The timid, flat, cautious assent of the "A-PEU-PRES," is one of these.

Rendering the French philosopher an English gentleman of the *Classic* family, the Married Man proved sufficiently entertaining, and augmented the proverbial good humour of the summer audiences.

The younger Colman in the summer season produced the *Battle of Hexham*, at the little theatre. As he intended no great depth of plot or extent of interest, he compressed his play into three acts, and it has no fuller catastrophe than the flight of him for whom we are interested, and the escape of his Queen and Son. The language of his play is an imitation of that of Shakspeare; for this he does not assign so good a reason as he might do. He contents himself with saying that "the language of remote characters should conform to their dress." If Shakspeare himself had thought thus, he would not have written the language of his own period. The reason why it were best to imitate Shakspeare's language, (presuming the power,) is, that at no time, before or since, was the English tongue so decidedly poetical as in the reign of Elizabeth. It is therefore the richest and fittest garb for distant events, that partake, through tradition, of the romantic. He has another critical remark, "A coxcomb only would aspire to the resemblance of the boundless powers of Shakspeare. Boundless power can only be imitated by power unbounded; and power thus equal will not bind itself to imitation. It is always proper to aspire to the highest excellence.—How nearly you approach it is a point to be settled by others. But Mr. Colman has happily not confined himself to verbal imitations. He thinks after Shakspeare's fashion, chiefly, however, in what is sportive. The following are lucky resemblances:

"Such a coil kept up with their two houses! One's so old and t'other's so old!—
They ought both to be pulled down, for a couple of nuisances to the nation."

"*Adel.*—How now fellow?
Fool.—How now, fool?
Adel.—What, sirrah! call you me fool?
Fool.—'Faith may I sir; when you call me fellow."

These seem to be recollections—they are only perfect imitations.

Shakspeare but seldom expatiates upon verbal niceties. He has done so once in the Antony and Cleopatra, on the words BUT YET.—Hear himself:

> "*Cleo.*—I do not like *but yet*, it does allay
> The good precedence; fye upon *but yet*:
> *But yet* is as a gaoler to bring forth
> Some monstrous malefactor."

Now then remark the use which a youthful genius of twenty-six has put it to:—

"*La Var.* Who, of our party, pry'thee, since the battle,
Have shelter'd here among the villagers?—
Can'st tell their names?
Barton. Ay, marry, can I, sir.
But CAN and WILL are birds of diff'rent feather.
CAN is a swan, that bottles up its music,
And never lets it out till death is near?
But WILL's a piping bulfinch, that does ever
Whistle forth every note it has been taught,
To every fool that bids it."

But his beauty of expression is at times simple and exquisitely true. He leaves an imitation of Comus for the following picture—

> "West of this a little,
> There stand some straggling cottages, that form
> A *silent* village;

This epithet is, I think, new. I have no doubt of its feeling propriety. Mr. Colman has retained his loyalty conspicuously through life. He has made the best use here of that ennobling sentiment, in the references, which he permitted himself, to a painful occurrence about the throne, and the virtues which it called forth. The audience, I remember, applied them with rapturous delight.

Among the applauded passages in this play, none stood higher than the picture of the outlaw's interrupted slumbers. Perhaps the common stabber of the forest *feels* but little; his life passes in enterprise or intoxication; and reflection is banished by what Macbeth calls "hard use." The picture

may certainly be received as a faithful portrait of such a mind as Gondibert's.

The song, which poor Edwin used to sing in Gregory Gubbins, called "Moderation and Alteration," is a judicious imitation of the famous old ballad, "The old and young Courtier," in Percy's second volume. The imitation appears to be closest in the following stanza—

> "With a good old fashion, when Christmasse was come,
> To call in all his old neighbours with bagpipe and drum,
> With good cheer enough to furnish every old room,
> And old liquor able to make a cat speak, and man dumb.
> Like an old courtier of the queen's,
> And the queen's old courtier."

I never yet understood that the sympathy with the heroic Margaret, after the Battle of Hexham, was weakened by the sufferings of the Temple; and though Clery's narrative be extremely affecting, yet Mrs. Inchbald's reading must have been confined, when she thinks it may bid defiance to all that history has recorded or that poets have feigned. But her remarks upon this play are excessively careless—they examine nothing: they tell nothing. Her question, "Did Gondibert know who his sovereign was?" is idle in the extreme. The partizan always knows this sufficiently to influence his conduct; and risks his life upon his opinion. Nor was this a question for the omnipotence of parliament to decide. It was at last determined by power, and if the right lay in the house of York, the "blood of Lancaster" ultimately prevailed.

As one proof of the pleasant turn of Colman's mind; during the progress of his play one of the tarantula physicians, who dance so madly after theatres, pestered the poet with prescriptions for the better health of his piece. "I beg your pardon, Doctor, said George, but we are talking about the Battle of Hexham, and not a *bottle of Huxham*." The Doctor, who equalled himself in good humour, swallowed the *tincture*, as soon as excessive laughter permitted, and fled from the BATTLE.

CHAPTER III.

Season of 1789-90.—*Mrs. Siddons absent.—Mr. Kemble's resources.—Covent Garden.—The Author's friend, Harley.—His talents.—Kemble in Henry V.—The Tempest.—Purcel's music.—Vanbrugh's false friend.—Mr. Kemble in the Libertine.—The Iron Masque.—King at Covent Garden.—The Crusade.—The Haunted Tower.—Mrs. Behn's Rover.—Quick in Richard.—Summer Theatre.—Palmer's return.—Winter season of* 1790-1.—*Duke of Cumberland's death.—Disinterment of the supposed remains of the great Milton.—Inquiry into the fact.—Mr. Kemble's conviction on that subject.*

Mr. Kemble experienced, as manager, some difficulty during the season of 1789-90. Mrs. Siddons had suffered in her health by the severe continuance of her professional duties; and she resolved to avail herself at length of a variety of invitations, which tempted her in a series, that brought her to the beautiful scenery of Devonshire. The tragedies of female interest were therefore either to be weakened by inferior representation, or for a time laid aside. The latter was the safer course. But the inexhaustible treasures of Shakspeare presented to Mr Kemble a highly tempting monodram, in the play of Henry V.; and he thought, how justly we shall shortly see, that the conqueror of Agincourt fell more completely within the range of his powers, than the characters of John or Richard III.; for reasons as much mental as personal—the pleasantry which so agreeably in Kemble relieved his severer habits, and the heroic perfection of his countenance and his figure. He therefore set himself seriously to prepare the play for representation. Now this, in Mr. Kemble's notion of the business, was, not to order the prompter to write out the parts from some old mutilated prompt copy lingering on his shelves; but himself to consider it attentively in the author's genuine book: then to examine what corrections could be properly admitted into his text; and, finally, what could be cut out in the representation, not as disputing the judgment of the author, but as suiting the time of the representation to the habits of his audience, or a little favouring the powers of his actors, in order that the performance might be as uniformly good as it was practicable to make it. The stage arrangements throughout the play were all distinctly marked by him in his

own clear exact penmanship, and when he had done his work, his theatre received, in that perfected copy, a principle of exactness, which was of itself sufficient to keep its stage unrivalled for truth of scenic exhibition.

Another play that he prepared, and rendered prodigiously attractive, was the Tempest, admitting in a temperate way some of the additions of D'Avenant and Dryden. These rendered it fuller as a stage spectacle and secured the assistance of Miss Farren in Dorinda, and Mrs. Goodall in Hippolyto. It gave a terrible dance of Furies in one place, and a masque of Neptune and Amphitrite in another; and a beautiful accession indeed in the occasional Epilogue, written by the elegant Burgoyne, and spoken by Miss Farren. After laughing at the *present* monsters of the Isle—the HE Miss Milliners, and the *stringed* and *cravatted* Exquisites, he comes to objects worthy of a people's gaze, and thus alludes to his present Majesty, when Prince of Wales:—

> "High o'er the crowd, inform'd with patriot fire,
> Pure as the virtues that endear his sire,
> See one who leads—as mutual trials prove—
> A band of brothers to a people's love:
> One, who on station scorns to found control,
> But gains pre-eminence by worth of soul.
> These are the honours that, on reason's plan,
> Adorn the Prince and vindicate the man;
> While gayer passions, warmed at Nature's breast,
> Play o'er his youth—the feathers of his crest."

Acquainted by age with the points of this allusion, I add with sincere pleasure, that no compliment, that experience presents to my memory, ever surpassed the above in propriety, and none ever approached it in delicacy and beauty. I would offer the last couplet triumphantly, as an attestation to the refined genius of Burgoyne. The mixed tone of tenderness, airiness and respect, with which Miss Farren delivered the last line, can never be forgotten—

> "*Play* o'er his YOUTH—the *feathers* of his crest."

Having thus noticed what Mr. Kemble had prepared, to supply at all events the means of battle, though his great ally had not joined him,—I pass over to the other theatre to remark upon the first appearance of my early friend, Harley: who came up with great distinction from Norwich to supply in part, if possible, the loss of Henderson. Harley had been bred to business in the banking-house of Lefevre, Currie and Co., in Cornhill. He was distinguished even there for quickness and accuracy; he played with what others would have called toil;

and not in the least clashing with his duty, he found leisure to enlarge his mind; to read the best authors with much discrimination; and to bind about him some few friends, who cultivated poetry without ostentation, and imparted their pleasures and their difficulties to each other. It may be supposed that a stage adorned by the peculiar powers of Henderson, would be attended by Harley with avidity; perhaps he a little resembled him, and such resemblance is usually decisive as to the choice of a model. There was nothing about him that could at all lead his hopes into the school of Kemble.

To Henderson he had no introduction whatever, but a letter written with so much modesty and talent, that it procured for him the zealous friendship of that great and good man. He inquired into his studies; heard him recite; seemed at once to discover that he had formed an able pupil unknown to himself; and at length perceiving that the bent of his mind was decidedly theatrical, he only then thought of the best means of preparing him, prudently, for his own profession. He recommended him to fence regularly with Angelo, and he extended his steps rather beyond the common limits of dancing. Mr. Kemble, though a graceful figure, learned his perfect stage deportment under Le Picq. Henderson made him known, as a young man whom he esteemed, to Cumberland and to Hayley, to Mr. Whiteford and Mr. Steevens; and Harley knew how to profit by such minds, and become agreeable to such men.

At length the young actor announced to Lefevre's people his determination as to the stage; the resident partner heard him recite some scenes of Richard; saw, as every body else did, the decided talent of his cashier, and assured him of his friendly aid upon all occasions. At length the trial was made at Norwich, and completely succeeded. He wrote to me the particulars of his debût, and of his first alarm upon encountering Murray in Richmond; who, with the usual condescension of a veteran, took his chance of overthrowing him by a charming exterior elegantly attired; or of gracing himself by promoting the success of the young candidate.

When Harley appeared at Covent Garden, a similar fate awaited him. The elegant George Holman condescended to *fence* with him in Richmond: and the public were paragraphed by Topham into the knowledge, that though Mr. Holman had obtained possession of Richard, even during the life-time of Henderson, his zeal for the profession led him to act the part of Richmond to Mr. Harley. The *World* abounded with little discrediting half lines to his prejudice; sometimes pretending a veneration for Garrick, as if it were some odd impeachment of a man's modesty, to act a character which that mighty creature

had sustained; at others, he resembled Henderson so much, that it might be true, as had been reported, that he was really his son; some resemblances moreover they discovered between him and Mr. Kemble, but these were unattended by any scandal whatever, for two human beings in person, gesture, and utterance, could not be more decidedly unlike. All these tricks, at the bottom, meant nothing more, than that he was really formidable to the *wear and tear* tribe of unthinking actors; and he was decidedly a favourite with the town, in Richard and Iago, in Shylock, and even in Lear. A reverend critic of that day, independent of his colleague's opinion, enumerated some of Harley's felicitous points in dialogue, and firmly added, "If he can continue to do this, he is an actor." Substantially, no doubt, the style of Harley was that of Henderson, and it is a disadvantage to an actor, to remind the spectator of another; besides, he never attained to the mellowness of his master in tragedy—his voice was harsher and less flexible. Another misfortune attended him, that he never could lay claim to any of the rich comedy of Henderson. But he was a man of sterling sense, and an actor of great energy; and, as what was imitative in him dropt off, he remained, on his own stock, the paragon representative of rough honesty and unshaken principle. Of Smith and Holman in tragedy, I should say, that I think they never got beyond Chamont; a hot, high, honourable soldier. Of Harley, that he stopt some where about Kent in Lear, and all those parts in tragedy or comedy, "which trace him in the line" of unsophisticated principles and purposes never to be shaken. The reader sees, that by this manner of expressing myself, I do not design to object to their higher efforts; but that I think their real excellence did not reach beyond the characters by which I measure it.

On the 1st of October, Mr. Kemble acted the part of Henry V. The play had not been done for 20 years. This stage indifference to the record of our brightest period may, perhaps, be accounted for on a ground by no means political. It may be presumed, that the mob always like to be told, that Englishmen, extenuated by disease, and in numbers as one compared with ten, are yet sure to become the conquerors of France. But there is so little *female* interest in the drama, that we cannot wonder at the coldness of our fair countrywomen to these fighting plays. Fair Catharine of France, and her broken English, or equally indifferent French, is not likely to attract the polished females of modern times. As far as Mr. Kemble was concerned, I do not think that even his Coriolanus exceeded his "royal HAL." As a *coup de Theatre*, his starting up from prayer at the sound of the trumpet, in the passage where he states his attempted atone-

ment to Richard the Second, formed one of the most spirited excitements that the stage has ever displayed. His occasional reversions to the "mad wag," the "sweet young prince," had a singular charm, as the condescension of one who could be so terrible. Of the other performers, James Aickin and Baddeley claim a distinguished praise, in which they share, humbly, with Kemble, that is, as Exeter, and Fluellen, being unapproachable, for tenderness and humour.

On the 13th of October he brought out his revision of the Tempest, of which I have already spoken. I have, I hope, sufficiently guarded myself against any presumed admiration of this production. The scenes of Hippolyto and Dorinda are very prettily written in that loose play of fancy, which Dryden mistook for nature. He usually combines in such dialogue an affected inexperience of life with a highly metaphysical intellect; and he passes indecency not seldom through the lips of inquiring chastity. All this was, no doubt, enchanting among the voluptuaries of Charles's court. In addition to the *unearthly* music of PURCEL, in this opera, the flowing melodies of Arne and the judicious accompaniments of Linley, filled the "Isle with noises" more appropriate than even the music of Macbeth. When the young student, in that charming science, has mazed himself in the difficult execution of foreign composers, let him meditate the *symphony* to the air

"Full fathom five thy father lies,"

and try himself to sing the air, with all its genuine expression; and he will then know that he has a language yet to learn, and no master to assist him, grounded essentially in our common nature, but only well spoken by beings of the most refined sensibility.

Mr. Kemble also made a few changes in the *False Friend* of Vanbrugh, and acted the principal character himself. It has so long been dismissed to those dramatic shades called libraries, that a few words may be proper as a sketch of its interest. Don John is one of those Spanish libertines, whom no considerations can disturb in their unhallowed pursuits. After violating every tie in life, they usually leave it by the stiletto they have provoked, or one destined to the bosom of another. The latter is the fate, which Vanbrugh doomed for the hero of the present *comedy*. Mr. Kemble tried to reform and save him; but to repent of villany could not be possible in Don John; and the character died, though he saved the man.

It may be proper, on this occasion, to express some surprise, that Mr. Kemble should ever have conceived himself a fit representative of such characters. He never looked in the least

like Don Giovanni. He had none of the high sanguine temperament, none of the careless hurry and audacious impudence of the fighting lover of the whole sex. His looks belied his tongue; and what might be credited, coming from Palmer, seemed morally impossible when uttered by Kemble. Don John begins his day usually in beating his valet, who is his master both in policy and wit; he then commences his more serious business of deceiving every living being, young or old, who may meet him; and passes his nights in lurking under verandas, or stealing into chambers, ruining reputations or destroying peace of mind, inflicting dishonour or death, or both, as he was provoked. Let us consider this in the unbending stateliness of Kemble's deportment, and the grave, prudent steadiness of his physiognomy. To use the title of one of his alterations, "O, it's impossible!"—and to this revival there could be no conceivable temptation, but his thinking the character one suited to his powers, for there is nothing else in the play, that could be attractive, unless from the personal beauty of the actress.

The French Revolution had now opened upon the world in all its horrors; and the stage, "which echoes but the public voice," was now destined to rave about that cage of tyranny, the bastile, which, like Newgate in the year 1780, had been besieged by a virtuous populace, and all its dark secrets returned to the light of day and the blessings of freedom. The Hon. J. St. John, proud of his achievement, Mary, Queen of Scots, and the people of Drury, as Skeffington used to say, "wanting him to *do* something for them," he did the romantic incident, called, perhaps with more propriety than is suspected, "VOLTAIRE's *Masque de fer*," or Man in the Iron Masque; whom, supposing him to have actually existed, Gibbon triumphantly proves to have been a *slip* of Anne of Austria; and consequently a brother of Louis the Fourteenth; and who, when her husband's imbecility no longer could father her offspring, might have, by strength of resemblance, thrown in question the reigning branch of the House of Bourbon.

Kelly acted the Iron Mask, and the entertainment really possessed considerable interest. Allusions to what was passing in France were plentiful, and one as to the dissolution of nunneries, was loudly applauded by such as knew nothing but the abuses of such institutions. It should be remembered, that under the eye of one of the most gentle and forbearing of kings, the wretched Chenier's tragedy of Charles the Ninth was acting with the most furious applause every night; and the Parisians were instructed that "the operation of time would teach the

grandeur of the State* to succeed to that of the Throne. The people resuming their splendour, and overthrowing the imposture of ancient prejudices, would reclaim their rights founded by NATURE. Their bliss, springing from the very bosom of their miseries, would lead them to destroy all those horrid Bastiles, bathed so long with tears of blood; and acknowledging their leaders, then no more their masters, they would be happy under a monarch, the friend of equity, and restorer together of liberty and the laws." And thus having rendered the very name of monarch odious, they flattered him out of all possibility of resistance, and finally sent him and his family to expire as traitors under the tranchant of the Guillotine.

Mr. King had, in November, agreed to act a few nights at Covent Garden Theatre, and on the 20th he played Touchstone, in As You Like It. But the style of this fine actor was at an immense distance from any thing about him, and he seemed, like the poor stag, one

"Left and abandoned of his *velvet* friends."

The Dramatist had been running on at that theatre, with a success never equalled in my remembrance; and the author, not finding on the sudden, a second subject for comedy, equal to his first, had gone to work upon a showy piece, to be called the Crusade, in which, by making a knight of Edwin, and what he could not well avoid doing, a beauty of Mrs. Billington, with music and scenery that were in course to cost *him* nothing, he hoped to retain his influence with the town, or what he always valued more, his interest with the manager.

On the 24th of November, Mr. Cobb produced his opera of the Haunted Tower. Time has a little changed our taste in music; but, long after the year 1789, the music which Stephen Storace compiled and composed on this occasion was heard with unabated delight. The composers of that time cultivated a pure and flowing melody like Paesiello; they had nothing of the flight, hurry, and almost excessive brilliancy of Rossini—the language with them still stood for something, however little. There was a business in this opera just enough to carry the singers into their places on the stage; nothing that merited the important term of a fable. But there was great ability in the cast; for with Kelly, Baddely, Moody, Suett, Dignum, Sedgwick, and young Bannister among the men, and Mrs. Crouch, Romanzini (poor Mrs. Bland), and Storace for the fairer part of

* The old expedient. See Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel.

Thought they might ruin him they could create,
Or *melt* him to that GOLDEN CALF—a *State*."

the performance; and they were all distinguished for talent of superior kind, and execution in the fullest contrast to each other.

Storace was certainly one of the most effective burletta singers in the world. She took business as a pleasure, and seemed always happy while employed. In the discharge of her public duty she was highly exemplary; laughed at colds and nervous complaints; used her shoes in the dry, and her pattens in the wet, to convey her to and from the theatre, and had not a grain of affectation about her. Nor have I yet done with the display of Kemble's activity in the present season; he made a very attractive comedy out of Mrs. Behn's Rover, which was beautifully acted; and just before the close, my most respected friend, Mr. Prince Hoare, gave to the stage a musical farce, called No Song No Supper, which must be delightful as long as there is any thing like the whim of Bannister, Suet, or Storace, in the successive ornaments of the stage. Mr. Kemble hus terminated a very successful season, with little outlay of money; fertile of attraction, in the absence of the greatest attraction of all; and proved his management to be at least equal to his acting.

A circumstance at the other theatre this season realized a pleasantry a few years back. Henderson one morning rehearsed his Richard the Third in the manner of little Quick, and the company was convulsed with laughter. Mr. Quick, no doubt, was aware that in "every man's thought" the performance of Richard by him would be deemed a most *ludicrous* achievement; but he fancied it would bring him a fine benefit night, and he tried it. He had, however, much too high a veneration for Shakspeare to play it otherwise than seriously; so that all he had to struggle with were some tones inveterately comic, and the associations of himself with comedy by the audience; and these came sometimes into their minds uncalled by any lapse into usual attitude or whimsical utterance.

I have already noticed the preparation of the Crusade. It was by some strange management brought out in the run of the benefits, so that if it hit strongly, it could only proceed at intervals, and at most could be but a turn over to the following season. The burlesque chivalry of Edwin did not prove captivating, and the author considered the production as rather weakly. The florid poets of the time assisted him in the songs; but the truth is, that Reynolds, although occasionally highly successful in the play with spectacle and music, is never there more than half himself: in fair broad comedy he luxuriates. The serious dialogue of his dramas always wants strength and poetry.

The summer theatre offered a few pleasing features. Palmer, a little recovering from his Royalty embarrassments, returned to

Colman's where he was invaluable—and Parsons, too, who had some odd mode of consulting his health, without forsaking his favourite usquebaugh, appeared there for the benefit of Mrs. Bannister, in Dr. Bartholo. Bannister, on his own night, wisely devolved the character of Gondibert on Palmer, and became himself a very excellent Gregory Gubbins through the long continuance of the Battle of Hastings.

The winter season of 1790-1 had scarcely commenced when the theatres were closed by the death of the late King's brother, the Duke of Cumberland. His Royal Highness was born on the 7th November 1745; in 1771 had married the widow Horton, sister of Earl Carhampton, and this match, while it excited some very unpleasant opposition to him in his family, became a source also of savage persecution out of it. The use that was made of it by Junius will never be forgotten. By *this* marriage his Royal Highness left no issue. Upon the subject of any *other*, reference may at any time be made to the Princess Olive of Cumberland, who will take every *suitable* pains to establish her title. The late Duke came much into public, was distinguished by great condescension, and good humour, loved music passionately, and passionately admired Mrs. Billington. You looked for his Royal Highness about the orchestra at the Opera, and seldom missed him. He as seldom missed the trial of Warren Hastings, while his health permitted him to attend; and thus he passed his life innocently and happily; not indecently opposing the government of his sovereign and his brother; and lending neither his countenance nor his allowance to any faction in the state. He had lingered some time under the combined attacks of asthma and consumption—had passed from Windsor to the coast, and back again to Windsor, with little improvement; and an inveterate cancer in the throat and mouth terminated his existence on the 18th of September. In conversation his Royal Highness had the hurried manner of his family, and gave easy utterance to any gay levity that struck his fancy. These trifles were malignantly weighed with the occasions that produced them, and brought forward to impeach his understanding; but had they proceeded from a facetious judge, or, if the character be acknowledged, facetious father of the church, the mere expressions would have excited little surprise and not the slightest derision.

About this time an occurrence, which may, I hope, be termed singular, frighted the whole island from its propriety. I allude to the disinterment of a coffin in Cripplegate church, supposed to contain the body of the great author of Paradise Lost. Milton, though without any theatrical purpose, has left his muse among the graces of the modern stage, by having written, for Ludlow

Castle, his magnificent Masque of Comus. With the severe and truly Grecian tragedy of Agonistes our stage has never yet become acquainted. About the year 1741 a gentleman, of the name of Dixon, meditated its performance in public, and he had fallen upon some distribution of it into parts, which in his own opinion at least, was calculated to produce a very powerful effect. Sincerely as I admire the poem in the closet, (and few offer more frequent splendours of diction to my memory) I should be unwilling to display the hero upon our common stages: and should survey the attempt to do so, with an alarm that sacrilege was about to invade the mind as well as the person of the great bard. To the latter atrocity I am fortunately restricted, and a short account of it shall be laid before the reader.

The best things are so liable to perversion, that it will excite little surprise to learn that the profanation alluded to arose out of a design to do honour to the epic glory of our country. A monument had been intended to Milton in the church of Cripplegate; and this naturally enough begot a desire to ascertain, if practicable, the precise situation of his remains. Among the mouldering coffins of past generations tradition lends her feeble taper, in the memories of hereditary sextons and pew openers. The search was accordingly made under the immediate direction of Mr. Strong, a solicitor, and a man of science, and Mr. Cole, one of the churchwardens. On the 3d of August, word was brought to these gentlemen, that the coffin of the poet was found; it was a leaden one, and reposed upon another of wood, conceived to contain the body of his father. They immediately repaired to the spot, and ordering water and a brush to be brought, they cautiously washed the surface, to ascertain whether any inscription was yet legible, to remove all doubt upon the subject. The coffin appeared to be old, much corroded, and without plate or inscription of any kind. Further these gentlemen did not think it proper to proceed. Fully satisfied as to the material fact, they retired; and leaving the sacred ashes undisturbed, ordered the ground to be closed. But the parish had the honour to possess at this time, for its overseers, a Mr. Laming, a pawnbroker, and a Mr. Fountain, a publican; and at a merry-making at the house of the latter, the subject being mentioned, they resolved on the following day, to see all that it was possible for them to discover. They brought the coffin to the edge of the excavation, where the light fell upon it; cut it open with a chisel, both at the head and the foot, and had a distinct view of the body upon turning down the lead. It appeared to be perfect, completely enveloped in a shroud of many folds; the ribs standing up regularly. When they disturbed the shroud, the ribs in course fell. These miscreants made various attempts

to extract the teeth, and one of them, the pawnbroker, had a mind to take the whole of the lower jaw as a pledge; but propably from the failure of any present supply of his friend the publican's spirits, threw it back again into its place. From such gurdians, the coffin passed into the custody of Mrs. Hoppey the sexton's servant, Elizabeth Grant, who discharged, I suppose by some male deputy, the functions of grave-digger in this well-conducted parish. Elizabeth Grant, by the aid of a light and in company with the workmen, exhibited the body to as many people as chose to look at it; and the teeth and the smaller bones and the hair were, at vile prices, sold to a great number of persons. A player of the name of Ellis had taken some hair and one of the ribs away in a piece of paper. As this person was an ingenious worker in hair, he meditated a larger purchase; but he was afterwards refused admittance. Mr. Neve published his succinct account of the transaction on the 24th of August, and entertained not the smallest doubt that the body so treated was that of Milton; he closes his narrative with this strong and terrible sentence: "The blood of the lamb is thus dashed against the door posts of the perpetrators, not to save, but to mark them to posterity."

There could be but one opinion as to the shameful usage of the body: but there were two as to the question, whether that body was or was not Milton's. Mr. Steevens, the commentator upon Shakspeare, distinguished himself, as usual, by the diligence of his inquiries, and the subtlety of his inferences. He decided against Mr. Neve's opinion; and maintained that Milton had certainly escaped this profanation, on the following grounds:

First—Because Milton was burried in the year 1674, and that this coffin was found in a situation *previously* assigned to the Smiths, a wealthy family, unconnected with his own. See their mural monument, dated 1653, immediately over the place of the supposed Milton's interment.

Secondly—Because the hair of Milton was decidedly of a light hue, and that of his pretended skull of the darkest brown, without any mixture of grey among it. Now Milton was 66 years old when he died, a period at which human locks are in a greater or less degree always interspersed with white.

Thirdly—Because the skull in question is remarkably flat and small, and with the lowest of all possible foreheads; whereas the head of Milton was large, and his brow conspicuously high.

Fourthly—Because the hands of Milton were full of chalk stones. Nothing of the kind was found in the hand of the substitute, though time does not destroy the trace, where the

fingers are preserved; a fact ascertained upon a subject almost coeval with Milton.

Fifthly—Because from the smallness of the bones—the slight insertion, whiteness, evenness, and sounds of the teeth, it was most probably a female, one of the three Miss Smiths. The sex could not absolutely be determined. If not a female, it might be the favourite son, John Smith, for whom an expensive receptacle had been ordered.

Sixthly—Because Milton was not in affluence—expired in an emanciated state—in a cold month, and his funeral was ordered by his widow. One of such expense was, therefore, little likely to come from a rapacious woman, who oppressed his children while he was living, and cheated them after he was dead.

Such are the strong points of Mr. Steeven's case. I will not weaken them by some, which prove nothing but the writer's pleasantry. His concluding reflections every reader would complain, if I omitted. I therefore insert them for two reasons: first, as expressing a right feeling upon the subject; and second, as presenting a lively portrait of the very peculiar mind of a gentleman, with whom I delighted to converse; and who, to antiquarian sagacity, united a pleasantry, that seemed eternally "mocking the meat he fed on."

"Thanks to fortune (says Mr. Steevens,) Milton's corpse has hitherto been violated but by proxy! May his genuine reliques (if aught of him remains unmingled with common earth) continue to elude research, at least, while the present overseers of the poor of Cripplegate are in office! Hard, indeed, would have been the fate of the author of Paradise Lost, to have received shelter in a chancel, that a hundred and sixteen years after his interment his *domus ultima* might be ransacked by two of the lowest human beings, a retailer of spirituous liquors, and a man who lends sixpences to beggars, on such despicable securities as tattered bed-gowns, cankered porridge-pots, and rusty grid-irons. *Cape saxa manu, cape robora, Pastor!* But an ecclesiastical court may yet have cognizance of this more than savage transaction. It will then be determined whether our tombs are our own, or may be robbed with impunity by the little tyrants of a workhouse.

> "If charnel-houses, and our graves, must send
> Those that we bury back, our monuments
> Shall be the maws of kites."

After a careful consideration of the subject, the only reason for supposing this body to be the poet's is, that it was found

exactly in the situation which tradition had assigned to it; I mean, under the clerk's desk, as it stood in Milton's time. Every thing else is against it. What, then, it may be said, became of the actual coffin of the great Republican? He was burried in the year 1674, and the church was repaired eight years after the interment. Let us recollect, that the year 1682 was a year of violent contest. The sectarists were assailed in their city fastnesses, and threatened with a court persecution, at least as violent as their own former persecution to the court. The citizens had to struggle with a mayor, nominated, in fact, by the king, and who arbitrarily appointed their officers. Perhaps the elders of Cripplegate might apprehended some violation of the Poet's remains. What they had already seen in the case of the regicides, they might behold in the case of him, who certainly did not aid, but as certainly *did* justify all that they had done. Such an apprehension might change the situation of the coffin. If this be deemed a gratuitous and uncalled for supposition, it can only be so from the fair presumption, that a frame worn out by complicated disease was of easy decomposition; and that one hundred and sixteen years was a period adequate to the demolition of all but the *literary* remains of Milton.

Mr. Kemble took great trouble to inform himself upon the subject. Ellis the player showed to him the spoils he had brought away from the grave; and he went to Cripplegate, and I think he saw Mr. Neve, who had convinced *himself*, that the body so profaned was really Milton's. But on being shown the objections of Mr. Steevens, he said they were absolutely unanswerable; and he added, "Ill as the commentator has behaved to me, I always admired the force of his mind, and am happy that he has exerted it, as I think, triumphantly, on the present occasion." We had long after this an opportunity of reviving the subject, when Bacon's most enchanting bust of Milton was put up in the front of the north gallery. He walked with me into the city one Saturday morning and while the servants were cleaning the church for the Sunday's service, we took our seats in the opposite gallery, and enjoyed this triumph of the elder Bacon over Rysbrack, whose bust of the poet, auditor Benson at length contrived to get into Westminster Abbey. I hope he mentioned it to Mrs. Siddons, because her own knowledge both of sculpture and Milton merited such a gratification.

CHAPTER IV.

Season of 1790-1.—*Mrs. Esten, her fine talents.—Mr. King replaced at Drury Lane, by Mr. Kemble.—Death of Edwin.—Grimace.—Mr. Kemble acts Charles Surface.—Mr. Munden's first appearance.—Mrs. Siddons re-engaged.—Siege of Belgrade.—School for Arrogance.—Death of Beard.—Sketch of him.—Pantheon Opera.—Bate Dudley.—His Woodman.—O'Keefe.—Merry.—Wild Oats.—Old Drury finally condemned.—Account of her last moments.—Old and Modern Theatres compared.—The Hon. F. North's Kentish Barons.—Next Door Neighbours.—Colman's Surrender of Calais.*

The first event of any theatrical importance in the winter season of 1790-1, was an acquisition of an enchanting woman and most interesting actress to the boards of Covent Garden. I allude to the performance of Mrs. Eston, in Rosalind, on the 20th of October. In her figure she was delicate, not tall, but graceful, and aware of the interest attached to the languor of sensibility. She had an eye that really did any thing that it pleased, aided by such lengthened fringes, as Byron or Moore have bestowed upon the beauties of warm climates.

The daughters of Comedy have a Scylla and Charybdis in their art, like other people; and rarely pass with such perfect skill, as to be uninjured by either affectation or vulgarity. The highest refinement to a mixed audience, always savours of the former. A careless indulgence of mirth, and a desire to provoke excessive laughter, drops blamed, or unblamed, into the latter.

Mrs. Eston's mother was the once celebrated Mrs. Bennett, upon whose novels our ladies depended for all the interesting romance of upper life, and looked not always in vain for a charm against the morning's ennui. No man need be ashamed of such reading as could amuse our greatest statesmen; and I confess I am inclined to attribute greater merit to such inventions, than to productions of a graver character, but so constructed, as to be useless to the wise and repulsive to the unlearned. From this mother Mrs. Esten received her mental accomplishments—perhaps something of the *novel* adhered to her through life.

She had really produced a great sensation in Edinburgh. From the quality of her voice, her tragedy coloured a little after Mrs. Siddons. In comedy she seemed as if her effects would be as gay and brilliant as those of Miss Farren, did not some concealed uneasiness check the animal spirits, and whisper to the actress, that she *herself* was not happy. But this characteristic quality of Mrs. Esten was highly favourable to her in such a character as Rosalind. "Dear Celia, I show more mirth than I am mistress of;" and passages out of number of a similar nature will crowd into the reader's memory to verify this remark. Her Indiana, a part seldom now before us, was given with infinite delicacy and grace. Her Monimia, her Ophelia, her Lady Townley, her Belvidera, all evinced more or less captivations in the actress; and after the two greatest names of her time, and as combining partially some of the excellencies of both, I know nothing that ought to stand before Mrs. Esten. Again I must notice the eloquence of her eye, as the unrivalled magic, that perhaps compels me to this decision.

On the 23d of October, Mr. Kemble replaced Mr. King, in the business at Drury Lane, for which he was so qualified; but perhaps in doing so replaced him in those town habits which were so fatal to his fortune. After playing all night with a sharper, at a fashionable club, and losing every thing, KING discovered that he had been bubbled, and hinted his suspicions to his antagonist; who coolly said to him, "I *always* play with marked cards; why don't YOU?" King was happy in the new arrangement, for it gave him all the support in his art that he had been used to, without the mortification of a nominal management divested even of the shadow of authority.

On the 30th of the same month, Covent Garden lost, if not in value, yet in utility, more than Drury Lane acquired—Edwin died. This singular being was the absolute victim of sottish intemperance. I have seen him brought to the stage-door at the bottom of a chaise, senseless and motionless. Poor Brandon, on these occasions, was the practising physician of the theatre. If the clothes could be put upon him, and he was pushed on to the lamps, he rubbed his stupid eyes for a minute, consciousness and brilliant humour awakened together, and his acting seemed only the richer for the bestial indulgence that had overwhelmed him. His last performance was at the Haymarket Theatre, always the palace of jocularity,—there, on the 2d of August, he acted the Gregory Gubbins of the battle of Hexham, and announced unconsciously the *wonderful alteration* that came upon him. On the 6th

of November they buried him in the church-yard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, and near to the grave of Shuter, an actor of voluptuous broad-faced humour, who had little in common with Edwin. The fun of Edwin was of a coyer nature, "that would be wooed and not unsought be won,"—you waited for it, but were never disappointed. He classed, I imagine, rather with Weston, and Weston seems to have had the fortune of our own Liston in his face, that no earthly being could see it without being thrown into convulsive fits of laughter.

I take the liberty to remark, that however agreeable it may be to excite this burst of laughter, it is in reality little flattering to the actor; it is natural distortion or pure grimace; features below the standard of just expression, or gestures silly and even indecent, that for the most part excite it. The great fame of the actor can only arise from just delineation of character. A proper estimate of the art itself, or a rational self esteem, should equally lead a man to disdain what a mere trick can acquire, and the exhibition of personal debasement usually provokes. A great actor forbad his children to see him in his farcical characters; he therefore thought that mummery degraded him.

On the 10th of November Mr. Kemble acted, for the first time in London, the part of Charles Surface in the School for Scandal. I should better have liked to see him in Joseph. However, although the public never admired the performance, he told me himself that Mr. Sheridan complimented him with having entirely executed his design. I confess I a little doubted the sincerity of the declaration, and well knowing the author's peculiar anxiety to keep up the strength of his cast, I can forgive the finesse by which he strove to retain the greatest name in his theatre in the hero of his greatest production. When I say above, that I had rather have seen Mr. Kemble in Joseph, I would guard against any implied preference of him to Palmer; that actor's representation of this sentimental hypocrite was as perfect a thing as even King's Lord Ogleby, or Parsons's Corbaccio.

On December 2d, Mr. Munden, an actor of great provincial celebrity, made his first bow at Covent Garden Theatre, in the character of Sir Francis Gripe, in the Busy Body. Since the days of Shuter nothing had been so rich, for Wilson was not a tithe of him;—and his mind seemed teeming with every surprise of comic humour; which his features expressed by an incessant diversity of playful action, and his utterance conveyed in an articulation of much force and neatness. He was received by a very crowded house with triumphant

applause; and, with the proper confidence of a great master in his art, he acted in the farce also, the facetious Jemmy Jumps. Here he felt some little alarm from the recent impression of poor Edwin; but he was above imitation, and played from himself so peculiarly and divertingly, that he pleased even those who could not think him equal to Edwin; and although the latter was a master in musical science, Munden sang the *Fair-haired Laddie* in a style so powerful, as to show that burletta had gained in him nearly as much as comedy.

Mr. Kemble now announced that Mrs. Siddons was re-engaged at Drury Lane. By his own energy, the house had suffered little from her absence.—She had, in various places during her tour, gained money along with the grand object, health; and strengthened a number of honourable connexions by paying visits to our nobility at their mansions in the country. After an absence therefore of two years, our great actress returned to Isabella on the 7th of December, and the Grecian Daughter on the 14th. The admirers of genius crowded again as usual about her standard, though the manager only called upon her three times in the whole month of December.

On the 1st day of the new year he was ready with the Siege of Belgrade, to employ all his musical strength, under such a composer at Storace, and Cobb had tried to equal the effect of his own Haunted Tower in situations of operatic effect. The letter duet, introduced in the present opera, perfectly enchanted the audience.

Mr. Holcroft has occasionally been mentioned as a very assiduous writer for the stage. He was studious in modern languages, and saw the English use to be made of French comedies, though he did not succeed so well as Murphy in their naturalization. On the 4th of February he produced, at Covent Garden theatre, his *School for Arrogance*, and the critics of the day, "being sand-blind, high-gravel-blind," could only fancy that the original play was French. Topham had now lost the powerful hand which sustained the *World* newspaper; and though Mr. Este was eccentric in point of style, yet he was a scholar, a gentleman, and a man of general reading; and with respect to theatricals, he really understood the subject; was conversant with foreign stages, as well as our own; and actually threw out in his rapid hints, rather than essays, much good remark and refined taste.

Holcroft had merely followed Mrs. Inchbald into the comic theatre of Destouches, and brought away *Le Glorieux;* drest him in English drugget, and compelled him to speak *prose,*

while he remained in this country. The *arrogance* of this play is purely French, and the *school* of it solely disciplined by French manners. Perhaps the only way to produce the full effect of such plots and characters in our language, is to throw them about a century further back—by which our blank verse might be obtained as some balance for the versification of the original; and our poetical and figurative diction might compensate for the want of ariness and naïveté, which are not in our character, and consequently not in our language. I believe Holcroft subsequently cut this play down to three acts, a treacherous and degrading experiment. Let comedy die at once, rather than lead the life of a farce—the consequence of the play is gone, and its fable becomes unintelligible. Besides, if the matter composing two acts can be cut away, and no deficiency be apparent, what is the skill of the author—where the unity and continuity of his interest? A manager will sometimes say to an author, "If you will *not* do it, I must?"—Perhaps, if he regards his reputation, he will curtail his piece himself; if he consults his interest, he will intreat the manager to do it for him. It has been stated to me formerly, on great authority, that managers have been won, by the solicitation for a song, to think favourably of a whole opera.

On the date last mentioned (4th February, 1791), died at his house, at Hampton, John Beard, Esq., formerly one of the patentees of Covent Garden Theatre. Mr. Beard was, in his youth, regularly bred to music in the king's chapel, and he sang in one other chapel, that of Cannons, by the wanton satire of Pope thus characterised:

> "And now the chapel's silver bell you hear,
> That summons you to all the pride of pray'r:
> Light *quirks* of music, broken and uneven,
> Make the soul dance upon a *jig* to Heaven."*

And thus did the tender bard of Twickenham allude to the

* With all my adoration of Pope's verses, I could never be the dupe of his pretended virtues. When one considers the trembling hypocrisy, the occasional falsehoods consequent upon his practice, it appears to be astonishing that, for the affected moral ends of satire, any being can be found to persist in so hateful a course. What, after all, is this satire, for whose indulgence a man sacrifices so many of the virtues? The strong feeling of the *ridiculous* in others always arises from our PRIDE: were we alive to our own imperfections, we should be ashamed of our mirth, and alarmed at our egotism. When Pope crawled so malignantly among the splendors of Cannons, he merited that Johnson should have growled through the Grotto at Twickenham, in his *hearing*,—

> "A charming habitation—for a TOAD."

sublimities, probably of the great Handel, whose Esther was performed at Cannons, and young Beard assisted in choir, before the duke of CHANDOS and his noble visitors.

Mr. Beard became eminent both as an actor and singer. His merits won for him the affections of Lady Henrietta Herbert, daughter of James Earl Waldegrave, and widow of Lord Edward Herbert. She had, unfortunately, nothing to bestow upon him but her hand, and he struggled through many embarassments, that she might not feel uneasy in the declension of her consequence. But the unavoidable conviction, that she had only plunged in difficulties the person whom she best loved, preyed upon her spirits, and she fell a victim to the disorders, which melancholy brought upon her, in the year 1753. He had acted with Garrick now for some years, when a second marriage, with the daughter of Mr. Rich, of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, changed the scene of his utility, and soon gave him the management, along with a considerable fortune. His first appearance there was on the 10th of October, 1759, when he acted Macheath in the Beggar's Opera; the celebrated Miss Brent was his Polly. How he acted and sang may be conceived from the circumstance, that the piece *again* ran 52 nights. In 1768 he retired from the theatre, and as in those days it was practicable to do, with a handsome fortune; which enabled him, in private life, to gratify to the utmost the liberality and benevolence of his nature. They, who were the best able to appreciate him, have invariably stated, that he was unrivalled as a singer, delightful as a companion, steady in his friendships, and honourable in every relation of life. For the advantage of the world, that life was extended to the term of 74 years. Some slight parallel, which my mind was forming between Beard and Kemble, may be allowed as natural, and only lamented as deficient. I did once expect, with confidence, that we should hear of Kemble's Theatre, as we had heard of Garrick's—that a splendid fortune would have compensated a life of labour; and that his retirement and his death might have been among us. But I must not anticipate details, that await the progress of this narrative.

My first mention of Mrs. Esten expressed what I felt from the series of her efforts. She added, on the 11th, a very beautiful edition of Isabella, and placed herself, unquestionably, next to Mrs. Siddons in her most captivating achievement. Four days after this, her Letitia Hardy, in the Belle's Stratagem, exhibited her captivations of every sort; but, I confess, Mrs. Pope in this part reigned paramount with me; unapproachable for either grace or enthusiasm.

On the 17th of February, the Pantheon opened as an opera-house. The effect of the building, thus changed from its original use, I perfectly remember. The boxes were small, and the whole had a confined appearance. The stage, too, wanted amplitude, and the dancers came nearer to the pit than was desirable to their best display. I heard the last act of Armida from Pacchierotti and Mara, and consequently the perfection of musical expression. The Theodore with Didelot in the ballet of Amphion and Thalia, exhibited an union of grace and agility, which suitably closed a day always to be remembered by me. I had dined, I recollect, that day at Mrs. Cowley's, with a party of great conversational powers. Poetry, ancient and modern, found advocates, and the beauties marshalled on either side were brilliantly recited. The display of Hebrew sublimities, which were provoked from De Coetlegon, by rather too strong a praise from his fair host of modern lyrics, led me, at my leisure, to Lowth, and the Bishop to an examination, the result of which, as might be supposed, reached beyond mere literary criticism.

Mr. Kemble had done much for opera, by the combination which I have recently alluded to; yet Mr. Harris was a manager of great tact, ably seconded by Lewis, and though his singers were decidedly of the native school, yet with such a pure simplicity as William Shield to compose for them, they were sure of admiration from all those (no small body) who boasted themselves superior to all foreign trick and sophistication, and called for strains such as flowed from the inspiration of Purcel and Handel, and who found their utmost ornament in the fancy of Arne.

For such an audience, Dudley Bate conceived his opera of the Woodman, and it was performed, during the season, 31 nights. The talent of this gentleman was of the adaptable useful class. Without having left any thing so perfect as to last, he could in various departments of letters ensure a very brilliant success: his great fund was a knowledge of actual life, through which he had passed with sometimes little prudence, always with great courage. The editors of daily papers formerly defended their paragraphs with their swords, and in the storm of party conflict few escaped without injury. I wish the Reverend Gentleman had left behind him any sincere narrative of his most eccentric life; from what I know of him myself, and have heard from persons of credit, it would leave the pages of romance comparatively insipid.

O'Keefe, too, strengthened Covent Garden by his pleasant farce, called Modern Antiques, or the Merry Mourners; and Quick, Munden, and Mrs. Mattocks, sent home the audi-

ences "laughing to their beds." Covent Garden Theatre, it may be remarked, had the decided preference of Majesty in its favour; so that Mr. Harris stood his ground firmly against all that Mr. Kemble could array against him. Merry, so well known by his lyric verse, and anxious to write for Miss Brunton, whom he afterwards married, completed a tragedy called Lorenzo; but I was, I confess, disappointed in this play. He was assuredly not dramatic: so that a few violent incidents excepted, the only chance it had, was the elegance of its diction, and some rather too palpable imitations of Shakspeare.

Mr. O'Keefe wound up the season, at this house, by his five-act comedy of Wild Oats, in which he placed his Jack Rover to run against the Dramatist of Reynolds. The same mercurial actor, Lewis, performed these rapid gentlemen; and without trying either play by standards to which they never submitted, it is but justice to both to say, that more amusement was never given. All is bustle, and whim, and laugh; and criticism has seldom undertaken more ungracious toil than in its elaborate attempts to persuade the audiences of Reynolds and O'Keefe, that they ought, by no means, to have allowed themselves to be entertained.

Drury Lane Theatre was finally condemned, and the last performance of the company, on Garrick's stage, was on the 4th June, 1791, when they acted the Country Girl, with No Song No Supper.

The following pleasantry, on this occasion, merits to be preserved.

"THE DEATH OF OLD DRURY.

"On Saturday night, of a *gradual decay*, and in the 117th year of her age, died *Old Madam Drury*, who existed through *six reigns*, and saw many generations pass in review before her. She remembered Betterton in his declining age; lived in intimacy with *Wilkes*, *Booth*, and *Cibber;* and knew *old Macklin* when he was a stripling.

"Her hospitality exceeded that of the English character, even in its early days of festivity, having almost through the whole of her life entertained from *one to two thousand persons, of both sexes*, six nights out of seven in the week. She was an excellent poetess, could be *grave* and *gay* by turns, and yet sometimes (catching the disorder from *intrusive guests*) could be *dull* enough in all conscience.

"Her *memory* was most excellent, and her *singing* kept on in such a gradual state of improvement, that it was allowed

her voice was better *the three or four last years* of her life, than when she was in her prime at the latter end of the last century.

"She had a *route* of near two thousand people at her house the *very night of her death;* and the old lady found herself in such high spirits, that she said she would give them 'No Supper' without a 'Song;' which being complied with, she fell gently back in her chair, and *expired without a groan.*

"Dr. Palmer (one of her family physicians) attended her in her last moments, and announced her dissolution to the company."

Things look lovely and facile in prospect, and the new theatre was expected to rise, like an exhalation, out of the ground, at the waving of Sheridan's hand. The progress was, however, tardy, for what that singular man seemed most to value all his life, an *expedient*, presented itself, in the new house erected in the Haymarket for the Italian Opera. While he could lease this theatre, the other was not at all pressing; and it was only when matters were really pressing, that Sheridan could ever be got to do any thing.

I shall not at the proper time refuse to Mr. Holland the credit of erecting the most beautiful play-house that I have ever seen. But I shall be indulged in a few expressions of mere gratitude to its predecessor; which Wren had constructed and the Adamses improved; and which had been, I was going to say, consecrated by the verse of Dr. Johnson, and rendered the steady temple of fame and fortune by the genius and the prudence of Mr. Garrick. If intellectual power were to be measured by an architectural scale, I should readily admit, that while you could conceive a grander edifice, fancy might be allowably suffered to exert itself upon a theatre worthy of Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble, Miss Farren and Mrs Jordan.

Our present theatres differ materially from that of Garrick. The gallery formed more of his plan than it does of ours. It came down upon the lower circle of boxes, and its visitors were not seldom exceedingly intelligent persons, and passionate admirers of the drama: they sat in a very favourable position for the enjoyment of a play, and seconded the pit in the just distribution of censure and praise. The boxes did not contain any thing like the number of persons now nightly visitors of the theatre, but certainly more real fashion. The necessities of the proprietors had not then multiplied new renters upon old renters, nor opened their doors to a free list extending beyond authors and newspapers, to nearly

every review and magazine, which takes any sort of cognizance of theatrical amusements. Their private boxes, too, were few—what there was showed itself fairly as audience. Upon great occasions seven or eight rows of the pit were laid into the boxes, and then the old Drury exhibited, two months before it closed, 412*l.*, as the total taken at the door for the first benefit of Mrs. Siddons after her return. London, however, was rapidly increasing, and it was conceived that larger theatres were demanded. All the articles of consumption, too, were upon the rise; among these were the salaries of performers; and the patentees thought that they needed not only more spectators, but greater prices. Both of these objects, they now determined to carry, on what they thought sure, because reasonable grounds. We may leave them for the present to mature their plan, while we turn to the theatre which should always be called Colman's, if the *little* theatre, in the changes of public taste, be not thought the more attractive appellation.

The late Earl of Guilford, whom I had once the honour to call my friend, whose conviviality and pleasantry endeared the name of Frank North, wherever it was heard, had written, like Colman, a play upon old English manners, which he called the Kentish Barons, and on the 25th of June it was acted for the first time at the summer theatre. There was occasionally a vein of genuine poetry in the dialogue; but the incident was one of pure invention, but little probable; and his antiquarian zeal had run costume much beyond convenience. They who amuse themselves with Strutt's collections, or glean from the useful chapters with which Dr. Henry enriched his History of England, may have learned, that there was a time when our beaux wore enormous pikes to their boots or shoes; and that these were chained to the knees of the wearer; so as to exhibit a man, at perfect liberty, walking in fetters. The author's punctilious exactness, excited a smile, and perhaps to see the solemn Bensley skating through a scene in these cumbrous appendages was rather a severe tax upon gravity—

> "For RIGHT, too rigid, hardens into wrong."

Mr. Kemble himself carried the attention to costume far, but as far only as he found *grace;* there he stopt. Exactness might load these pikes upon the shoes with portable mirrors, and looking downward be once more an argument of self-love instead of confusion.

Mrs. Inchbald, pursuing her course of French literature, now produced her very entertaining comedy called *Next Door Neighbours;* and in conformity with her title, she took, as a sort of cause and effect, two French pieces to work upon, *Le Dissipateur* and *L'Indigent.* These she treated with that skill which she had now acquired, and the theatre was certainly indebted to her facility.

Mrs. Jordan kindly came this season to act for Mrs. Bannister's benefit. Every body was disposed to assist a lady whom all respected and admired. In the mean time, Colman was in rehearsal with a second old English play, which took off some of the lavish raw material, that had dressed the Kentish Barons; and from its popularity wore out its habiliments—I allude to the *Surrender of Calais,* another of those happy imitations, which, however close, are not servile, and seem to resemble Shakspeare, as a sport, rather than a necessity. How far our great dramatic poet looked at the state of his company, while writing his play, I cannot determine—he seems to have been governed, as to characters, solely by his fable. The summer manager always appeared to write for his green-room, and to value himself upon exactly fitting his actors with proper vehicles for their talents. What he did in this way for Bannister, was really an achievement; but the interest about him, and the unsophisticated nature of his acting, made him one of the surest cards that any manager could play with.

Bensley, in the grand tirade before Edward, as Eustache de St. Pierre, became absolutely sublime, from the virtuous energy, that seemed to dilate his person, and thunder from his sonorous organ. It really was a display not to be forgotten. The play, commencing the 30th of July, was acted 28 times in the brief remainder of the summer season.

As an amusing instance how *hints* may be taken, in the *grave* scene in Hamlet, one delver asks the other, "Who builds stronger than the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?" The answer is, "The gallows maker, for that frame outlives a thousand tenants:" on this hint, Colman constructed a brace of these frame-makers; and sent on Parsons to "pluck out the heart of their mystery." The scene, like its original, was a favourite always; and Colman defied, though Garrick did not, the criticism of Voltaire, and all the Laharpes and Chateaubriants he had left behind him. The author Zaïre found no great difficulty in overthrowing the feeble fences that Horace Walpole set up against him, when he advanced to insult, rather than attack the territory of Shak-

speare—but the race of French critics seem to have slunk away from the preface of Johnson; where, indeed, the *seal* is put upon all the flimsy pretences of that vain people of critical legislators: I say *people* of critics, for they ALL detail the same arguments, and there is little difference in their force between the Abbé and the Shopkeeper.

CHAP. V.

Winter season of 1791–2.—*Mr. Fawcett at Covent Garden.—Mr. Charles Kemble.—Drury Lane removed to the Haymarket.—New prices.—Prelude.—Oscar and Malvina, by Byrne.—Reynolds's notoriety.—Mrs. Billington.—Ryder dies.—Day in Turkey.—Lady Mary Wortley Montague.—Warburton's singularity as to her letters.—Mrs. Jordan.—Public opinion.—Her apology.—Mr. Kemble's difficulties.—Cymon revived.—Huniades.—Mrs. Siddons acts Q. Elizabeth in Richard III.—Mr. Kemble forced into a duel by Mr. J. Aickin.—Road to Ruin.—Richardson's Comedy of the Fugitive.—Jealous Wife.—Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons.—Drury Italianized.—P. Hoare's Dido.—Little Theatre.—Mrs. Whitelock.—Mrs. Sheridan's death.—Mrs. Bannister retires.*

The winter season of 1791–2 was opened by Covent Garden with the Dramatist, in which Mrs. Merry, formerly Miss Brunton, acted for the first time since her marriage. To have yielded to the ardour and accomplishments of Merry could be a matter of no surprise to any person who had enjoyed his society. Bating his tendency to play, which was a fever in him that nothing could render intermittent, he was one of the most original and captivating men whom I have ever known. But unhappily for himself and his former associates, he now became perfectly *rabid* with the French revolution; associated himself with the radical press, and spoke its furious and disgusting language; by degrees he detached himself from men who could not echo, and disdained to humour him; and though complexionally indolent, his political passion lashed him into a daily ridicule of all that ages have respected, and he became one of the eyes of Argus (a newspaper so named,) and amused himself with what he called "common stuff" and "stars and strings." Over this transformation even the muse possessed no power; and the poet and the gentleman vanished together.

The 21st of September brought upon the boards of Covent Garden Theatre Mr. Fawcett, the younger, from the York company. He made his entré in Caleb, in He would be a Soldier, a part of great nonsense and rattle, in which a man

of Fawcett's sound common sense descends to amuse vulgarity; conscious at the same time that he possesses powers of higher value; which, without any great refinement, interest deeply, and urge the moral lesson home to the heart. There is in this actor, whenever the opportunity is given, as great a command over the tender affections as can be displayed in characters of middle life. I have a pleasure in thus detaching his real excellencies from a crowd of buffooneries, which he always seems to disdain while he exhibits them; and for which there are beings *naturally* gifted.

Mr. Kemble, during the summer, had been greatly alarmed by the very serious illness of his brother Charles, then a youth of fifteen, whom he had placed, three years before, at the College of Douay, in order to his obtaining all those advantages which he had himself formerly derived. The reported attainments of his brother gave him the highest satisfaction. But on this journey he expected to find him in a very dangerous state of health. He had, however, happily recovered; and, under the care of a friend, was proceeding on his way to England. They met upon the road.

Mr. Kemble was sitting alone in his carriage, reading, as the other carriage advanced in the opposite direction, he raised his eyes from the book, and exclaimed, "Charles!" The meeting was quite theatrical: for, though neither Henry the Eighth nor Francis the First, yet certainly one day the Wolsey and Cromwell of the drama, like the monarchs just named,—

> "Those two lights of men
> Met in the vale of Arde;"

and probably in their embraces, as much exceeded the kings in *sincere affection*, as the latter in splendour surpassed every previous exhibition of royal fraternity. Mr. Kemble was never an "inquisitive traveller;" he wanted only to see his brother; he now saw him quite restored, and they returned to this country in company.

Upon his arrival, Mr. Charles Kemble, for a short time, accepted a situation in the Post Office, and he was removed from one position in it to another; but the *foreign* department proving no more to his taste than the inland, with the tendency of all his family, he resolved to try his fortune on the stage. He soon, therefore, quitted Lombard street, to make that experiment, which, after a year's rustication, sent him to the metropolis: a result which has so gratified the public, and, I can fairly add, done honour to the profession.

The removal of the Drury Lane company to a theatre so

uncommonly splendid as Novosielski's Opera-house, seemed to the patentees a favourable opportunity for asking a small increase of the prices of admission; and, after much noise and clamour, they established six shillings for the boxes and three shillings and sixpence for the pit. A prelude, called Poor Old Drury! slight, but well enough aimed, and written by Cobb, suffered more than any thing in the contest. The great joke was the damage done in transferring the scenery and the properties from one house to the other. But the spectators seemed to think that the splendid theatre itself suffered most by these invasions. Nothing but a conflagration ever produces uniform scenery. The old, though too low for the increased size, is found too good and too plentiful to be thrown away, and its adaptation is always a very disjointed business. To one point of this prelude a reasonable objection may be raised.—It is said most ridiculously by an Italian singer and a French dancing master, that *dancing* and the *opera* should always go together in contempt of *sense* and *nature*. It would be well if writers who sport such ideas as these, in compliment to old prejudices, would a little enquire what they mean. It did not become the author of the *Siege of Belgrade*, a mere farrago from a hundred Italian operas, to talk in this way; and those who at best in dancing reach only as far as divertisement, might learn a little respect for the learned and enchanting ballets of Noverre. I once sat with Dr. Charles Burney during the representation of Iphigenie en Aulide, and his classic mind was in perfect ecstacy at the deep interest and graceful splendour of that beautiful version of Grecian history or fable. And then, here comes a farce writer, in his rudiments, and lectures away upon *sense* and *nature!* And all this, moreover, in a house constructed for opera, and soon to exhibit operas again; and which had afforded the destitute a seasonable shelter for the *sense* and *nature* to which they so exclusively pretended. The period, too, when most of these qualities were to be found in us, produced a beautiful species of entertainment combining both the opera and the ballet: I allude to the Masque of which Jonson was the actual inventor, and which Milton, in emulation of that great poet, did not disdain to compose.

Indeed Covent Garden Theatre, on the 20th of October, exhibited a very captivating ballet, called Oscar and Malvina, which the good taste of Mr. Byrne had rendered a nearly permanent attraction of the theatre. Byrne himself took Oscar, and Follet strode through his fierce rival Carrol; and for Malvina he brought over Mad. St. Amand from Paris; and her ease and grace, her pointed action and just expression,

delighted the spectators. Scenery and music lent their brilliant aids to the inventor of the ballet, and thus Mr. Byrne drew interest from the page of Ossian, as Noverre had done from that of Euripides.

The Crusade had not drawn Reynolds very widely away from his proper sphere, for by the fifth of November he was ready with another dramatist under the title of Notoriety. The title implies the passion of Nominal, the hero. As the first comedy aimed to make dramatic effects popular; the second endeavoured to render popular effects dramatic; and they succeeded equally, and by means somewhat similar; for the characters were conceived to run tolerably parallel to each other. In short it was the gay and entertaining effort of a young author, with a very quick discernment of the ridiculous in life; who occasionally threw in very happy points of dialogue, and whom dulness never approached for a moment. Among those points which amused the audience, he allowed himself a joke at the *sleeping* partners of the greatest house in the nation. This in Reynolds was rather taste than politics. He hated long speeches much; but he at all times hated faction more, and should not have raised a *laugh* for the gloomy assailants of our representatives. It may be as well to show, as a lesson to managers, that Mr. Harris cast into Notoriety, Lewis, Quick, Wilson, Munden, Johnstone, and Farren, the father of the present actor of that name. The ladies were Mrs. Webb, Mrs. Wells, and Mrs. Esten.

The success of the music at the rival theatre led Mr. Harris to re-engage Mrs. Billington, who had been absent for a couple of seasons. Kemble immmediately added Madame Mara to his operatical strength, and she appeared in Mandane on the 17th November. There was little, to be sure, in which Madame Mara could be employed, unless a series of operas had been written for her of the complexion of Artaxerxes. She was in truth a most exquisite musician, but not the least of an actress. Majesty she could not assume; she was too feeble in her person; and even when to sing in an orchestra, sometimes gave offence, because she was compelled to be seated, when she was expected to be standing. Add to this that she never spoke our language tolerably, and much could not reasonably be expected. Yet she sang the melodies of Arne, as she did those of Handel, in a style so pure, and in a manner so easy, as to place her first most decidedly among the greatest singers of *her* time, or any time.

Mr. Ryder, the commedian, died on the 25th of this month,

at Sandy Mount in Ireland. He had a great deal of hard and diversified talent: was always useful, but never, I think, pleasing. He was a man of reading and reflexion; and one of his daughters was singularly accomplished. I have read some of her translations of modern latinity, in which she could have had no predecessor or guide; and her versification was exact and elegant. While this praise is given to the lady, it is necessarily reflected upon the father; for to what less than parental care could such accomplishment be owing? Rudiments, particularly of the dead languages, are always too painful to be the objects, I think, of female choice: those once given, to proceed may be pleasing, as it gratifies curiosity, and confers distinction.

On the 3d of December Mrs. Cowley brought out her comedy called A Day in Turkey, or the Russian Slaves. The charming letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague are in every hand, and in consequence every body became enabled to display the secrets of Turkish harems; our fancies teemed with visions of lazy luxury, and the turban'd Turk became a resource to our dramatist at second hand, when actual observation fell short, and domestic life among ourselves supplied no novelty. Female plays usually build a good deal upon the sex; Mrs. Cowley secured the talents in her present comedy of Mrss. Pope, Esten, Mattocks, and Martyr. The interest springs from the hatred of Russians and Turks and was by no means strongly felt by the audience. That happened to Mrs. Cowley, which has happened to others; that things glorious in imagination are but cold in their realities. In her Belle's stratagem the enthusiasm with which she points to some of the incidents of the present play, might have led one to expect uncommon effort in their exhibition—but there was much bustle to little purpose. The piece should clearly have been an opera.

As I have alluded to Lady Mary Wortley's letters, I take the opportunity of showing a degree of literary blindness, insensibility, or prejudice, seldom I believe, equalled. I have now before me a manuscript letter from bishop Warburton, dated from Prior Park, July 1763, and intended to amuse the ladies at Mount Edgecombe. He thus speaks of the genius, that his friend Pope had adored. "But literary news, while I have my senses is more in my province. I suppose, as *fashionable* ladies, (for you see I am not disposed to compliment) you have read Lady Mary's letters with great eagerness, and laid them aside with as much contempt. I suppose they are genuine, even from their very insignificance." That editors adopt the passions of the authors whom they

publish, is a disgraceful truth. The unmanly persecution of this lady by Pope should have ceased with his existence. Warburton thought himself warranted to omit the indecencies of the poet's writings, and preserved his hatred where it disgraced him. The Christian and the bishop were equally "strong against the deed." At this very time (1763) Doctor Smollet thus characterized her epistolary writings. "The publication of these letters will be an immortal monument to the memory of Lady M. W. M., and will show, as long as the English language endures, the sprightliness of her wit, the solidity of her judgment, the elegance of her taste, and the excellence of her real character. These letters are so bewitchingly entertaining, that we defy the most phlegmatic man on earth to read one without going through with them, or, after finishing the third volume, not to wish there were twenty more of them." But then Smollet himself, according to Warburton, "was a vagabond Scot, who wrote nonsense ten thousand strong." And thus the GUIDES of reason persecute one another!

I take this opportunity to observe, that, during the present season, apologies had been frequently made for Mrs. Jordan's indispositions, and perhaps the theatre itself might lend some countenance to the complaints made by the daily press. But this charming woman lay open to attacks of another nature, and she addressed an explanation of her conduct as to the provision she had made for her children, dated, oddly enough, Treasury Office, 30th November, 1791. In this letter there was a phrase sufficiently unguarded—"I would not obtrude upon the public an allusion to any thing that does not relate to my profession, in which alone, I may without presumption, say, I am accountable to them."

Her assertion that she had never capriciously deserted her duty to the public, and was always unable to act, when she had declined to appear, was not accepted by certain persons; and she was considerably annoyed on the 10th of December, when she acted Roxalana in the Sultan. She therefore suddenly advanced to the lamps, and addressed the audience in the following words:—

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

"I should conceive myself utterly unworthy of your favour, if the slightest mark of public disapprobation did not affect me very sensibly.

"Since I have had the honour and the happiness to strive here to please you, it has been my constant endeavour, my unremitting assiduity, to merit your approbation. I beg

leave to assure you, upon my honour, that I have never absented myself one minute from the duties of my profession, but from real indisposition. Thus having invariably acted, I do consider myself under the public protection."

And thus, at all events, an end was put to the disturbance before the curtain. As to any that occasionally reached me as happening behind it, all that I need say is. that it is a perplexing situation, to manage without absolute control—How all the claims of jarring interests are to be conciliated—how all imputations of very natural partiality are to be disproved or silenced, is of the utmost moment to a theatrical community, and a burthen under which few managers absolutely preserve their equanimity. Nor is this all: there is sometimes interference from persons, whose attachments only connect them with the stage, and a cabal is often formed that shakes the sceptre of the monarch of a theatre.

By this time Mr. Kemble began to feel that, however smoothly the conditions of the management had been arranged, there were impediments in the way of his plans; and of these he at times could not *but* complain. Drury Lane was besides paralyzed by getting to the western side of the Haymarket, and the plunge into the Opera-house renewed the fable of Salmacis:

> Quisquis in hos fontes vir venerit, exeat inde
> Semivir; et tactis subitò mollescat in undis.
> METAM. *Lib.* IV. *v.* 385.

Nothing short of absolute perusal of all the offered pieces should convince me, that the talent of the country was so debased as to afford nothing better than what was now produced. A vast deal of money was lavished upon Garrick's trifling opera of Cymon. The literary talents of Mr. Garrick were absolutely confined to epigram and epilogue. His letters have little neatness, and his attempts at the drama should be narrowly scrutinized, that his actual part in them may be ascertained. Cymon decorated highly, and its three females, Urganda, Sylvia and Fatima, acted by Mrs. Crouch, Miss Hagley and Mrs. Jordan, brought some fashionable audiences into that beautiful theatre: and showed, in spite of their prelude, a leaning to the original uses of the house. The performance of Cymon closed the year 1791.

The reader will have seen that the *Siege of Belgrade* had furnished a subject for opera of considerable attraction. The siege of that place in 1456 by the Turks, under Mahomet the Second, now was worked into a tragedy by Miss Hannah

Brand. The besiegers are repelled by the valour of Huniades, a character performed by Mr. Kemble. The authoress herself acted the heroine Agmunda. How it was effected I now forget, but she absolutely withdrew the play for the purpose of cutting out the hero, and the tragedy was evidently not the worse for his departure: for the audience were not a jot more indifferent to the new title of Agmunda, than they had been to the more barbarous name of Huniades. If my memory does not deceive me, the costume in this play was somewhat unusual, and provoked a laugh,—I think, black with gold ornaments; and the first of May unluckily offered an association, which struck the fancy with images unfriendly to tragedy.

Mrs. Siddons had resumed her performances by the magical Isabella, to which I have always seen her admirers the most strongly attracted. Probably to strengthen her brother's Richard III. on the 7th of February, she acted Queen Elizabeth in that tragedy. There is no question about her preeminence in this "relenting shallow-thoughted woman." But the unsparing ambition of Richard has something of an immoral effect upon the audience; and their proper sympathy with his victims is blunted by the *certainty* of his success, and the daring intrepidity with which he hurries them on from one atrocity to another. There is something in triumphant villany against which the moral sense is never sufficiently guarded. The scene with the princes is not to me greatly affecting; it tires rather than softens the hearer; it is disagreeable rather than distressing; and I have commonly retreated from my place, until it had passed away. As this could never be done with Mrs. Siddons, I sat the scene out. Her look and action when she exclaims, "I am their mother, Sir." and endeavours to pass on with the children, absolutely beggared all description.

I certainly do not court occasions of differing with Mr. Steevens, and I need frequently my utmost strength to resist the power or the skill of his attacks. He has consigned the character of Queen Margaret in this play, and the dream of Clarence, to ridicule and contempt. I am sure that if Mrs. Siddons had remained longer on the stage, and devoted her last energies to the curses of Margaret, that she would literally have lifted the hair upon the heads of those who heard her, and left an impression of her power stronger than any part of her Lady Macbeth has supplied. The visit to the "bottom of the monstrous world," and the other images of the dream, are in my judgment transcendant and sublime.

An occurrence took place about this time, that menaced

the life of our great tragedian. He had, I know not how, found himself at table with Mr. James Aickin. Although the tones of that gentleman's voice were among the sweetest that ever met the ear, yet I have heard that his temper was not happy. He had conceived himself injured by some arrangements of Mr. Kemble's management, and in this convivial meeting sought various opportunities to be personally rude to him. On the morning of the 1st of March, he walked with Mr. Kemble to some field in Marylebone, and there took his own mode of obtaining satisfaction. The elder Bannister somehow was pressed into the business. They placed Kemble exactly as they pleased. Aickin went a few paces from him, perhaps he hardly knew how many, and fired at his manager—fortunately, for himself, as Kemble, he missed his aim. To return his fire Mr. Kemble refused—"He had required satisfaction, and what he required he had now received." A reconciliation, as they call it was then effected. He spoke to me afterwards upon the subject, and said "he saw from his adversary's levelling at him, that he was in no danger." Why is not a defiance of law by a positive breach of the peace punishable *after* the parties are satisfied? Should not the justice of the country be also satisfied? A heavy fine might teach the duellist to moderate these violent tendencies.

Perhaps at no time in my remembrance did Covent Garden ever make equal effort to distance its proud rival. Merry's opera of the *Magician no Conjurer* failed on the 4th night, but the *Road to Ruin*, the most perfect of Mr. Holcroft's comedies, was acted thirty-eight nights in this season, though not brought out till the 18th February. As it is nearly now as popular as it was two-and-thirty years ago, I am precluded from more than a general admission of its interest, its truth and nature. The ruined Goldfinch, as acted by Lewis, though extravagant, was astonishingly entertaining; and Munden's excellence in old Dornton has, I think, never been surpassed. Let me add, that Holman's young Dornton was extremely characteristic; ardent, generous, and affecting, a transcript from his own nature.

Mr. Joseph Richardson had a reputation for talent, which led the town to expect much from his comedy of the Fugitive, produced on the 20th of April. He had been received into the party and associated himself closely (too closely for his health with Sheridan. He seemed to be always looking to the Rivals as his model, and affects the turn of his friend's sentences. He loves the *indiscretions of youth*, and runs a tilt against *early prudence*. But with a violation of propriety, of which Sheridan has no example, he has thrust his moral

or immoral sententiousness into the mouth of an Admiral, and makes his Cleveland declaim in the following style :—

"*Old Manly.* Yes, my son too, an abandoned profligate.

Admiral. Nay, if that were all, there might be hopes.—The early little irregularities that grow out of the honest passions of our nature, are sometimes an advantage to the ripened man; they carry their own remedy along with them; and when remedied they generally leave the person wiser and better than they found him—wiser for his experience, and better for the indulgence which they give him towards the infirmities of others—but a canting, whining, preaching profligate—a sermon maker at twenty—a fellow that becomes a saint before he's a man—a beardless hypocrite—a scoundrel that cannot be content with common homely sinning, but must give it a relish by joining a prayer with it in his mouth—of such a fellow there can be no hopes."

The sentiments here delivered are decidedly Sheridan's and may be found in his plays. Apologies like these are incentives to youth—they pimp to the passions, and predict moral improvement as the ripened result of profligacy. Where utter perdition is escaped, let us rejoice with him who redeems his errors by his virtues : but let us not *send* out our youth upon the forlorn hope, and confidently expect their safe return. The arrangement of the latter half of the tirade echoes the tune of Absolute's reproof of Falkland.

"A poor industrious devil like me, who have toil'd, and drudg'd, and plotted to gain my ends, and am at last disappointed by other people's folly, may, in pity, be allowed to swear and grumble a little; but a captious sceptic in love, a slave to fretfulness and whim, who has no difficulties but of his own creating, is a subject more fit for ridicule than compassion." *Rivals*, p. 78.

I have thought it important to notice a hazardous moral in a work of elegance.

The Fugitive is, perhaps, rather too like the heiress in the principal incident. Julia Wingrove is a second Miss Alton, more worked out, as Mrs. Jordan was to act it. In the cast of the play, the author was peculiarly happy. Both theatres at present, might be challenged in vain to exhibit united such a host of positive first-rate ability. The men were—Bensley, Wroughton, Parsons, Palmer, Dodd, King, Wewitzer, Barrymore. The women—Miss Farren and Miss Pope: Mrs. Ward, Mrs. Webb, Mrs. Kemble, Mrs. Jordan. He had a prologue from Tickel, and an epilogue from Burgoyne. The parallel drawn by the former between the novice author and the novice dressed for St. James's was really worthy of his name.

"Close to the palace as her chair draws near,
The very tassels seem to quake with fear."

The general, working for Mrs. Jordan, fell greatly below what he had occasionally written for Miss Farren. The piece succeeded amply; but a degree of indolence came over its author, and he could not conquer it. He was a senator, and did not speak; a man of letters, and did not write; a proprietor of a theatre, who slept over its interests; he lived a few years the life of Sheridan, and as early as his 47th year, from the effects of a ruptured blood vessel, at an inn near Bagshot, he "died and made no sign." Few men entered life with more brilliant hopes than Richardson; he distinguished himself greatly at Cambridge; he did not follow his profession at the bar, but he contributed to the classical pleasantries then in vogue; his learning preserved his taste. That great discerner of merit, the late Duke of Northumberland, testified a sincere regard for him, and had, in return, Mr. Richardson's decided veneration. Mr. Richardson was convivial without much effort, was generally beloved, and long regretted.

On the 28th of April, Mrs. Siddons acted Mrs. Oakley. Mr. Kemble performed Oakley, and Palmer the Major. The passion of jealousy tending strongly to tragedy, I thought it, in comedy, strong enough for Mrs. Siddons. Mrs. Oakley has excited more laughter in other hands, but not, I think, more attention. The performance was full of spirit and nature. Another novelty from this great actress I have to mention. After her Katharine, in Henry VIII. she recited Collins's Ode on the Passions, and assumed them in her look and gesture. Perhaps they never played round features equally expressive; and as an ardent admirer of the genius of Collins, I could not but wish, that his melancholy had been soothed by so bright a vision; but his end was dark and cheerless.

I have sported above with the conversion of the Drury Lane company to operatical uses. I am now to show the the full extent, to which the tendency was carried. Mr. Prince Hoare was employed upon the Didone Abondonnata of Metastasio; and fitted its music, I fear, not with suitable, but *English* words, distributed into recitative and air; and Dido, with immense splendour of scenery, dresses, and decorations, was brought out on the 23d of May. Madame Mara was your Dido, Kelly Iarbas, and the pious Eneas Mrs. Crouch herself! There was, for garnish, a masque, in which Bannister was the Neptune, Miss Collins Venus, and the

three Graces, Misses Decamp, Jacobs, and Heard. And yet, all this, with the aid of Sedgewick, and Dignum, and Master Welsh, with supernumeraries out of number, lived only three or four nights, and then vanished like a dream. But the lovely power of Metastasio must not suffer from the harshness of another language, and the taste of a people requiring bolder situations in the drama, and a crowd of incidents arranged with little artifice, and ambitious only of striking effects. I have no means of consulting Mr. Hoare's version, but I willingly leave, upon this and every occasion, my sincere, though friendly attestation to his talent.

On the 1st of June, Covent Garden closed its brilliant season, that the theatre might be rebuilt; and on the 15th, the Haymarket also shut up, and left the little manager opposite to make his hay without further encroachment.

For he still considered any period beyond the middle of May as encroachment, and pleasantly told the great patentees this, among other truths, in a prelude, entitled *Poor Old Haymarket*, or *Two Sides of the Gutter*. He laughed then, and has always done so, at the rage for splendid theatres; and might easily, like others, have embarked a set of subscribers in a building scheme, had he thought that any thing more was essential to the purposes of playing, than neat accommodation, pieces carefully written—brilliantly, if possible; and ably, if not powerfuly, acted.

On the 15th of June, Mrs. Whitelock, a sister of Mrs. Siddons, made her first appearance at the summer theatre, in the heroic Margaret of the Battle of Hexham. She certainly was Siddonian in figure and countenance, and though suited to a theatre of more stately dimensions, approved herself to be a mistress of her profession. She most resembled the look of Mrs. Siddons in comedy. In tragedy, that wonderful woman assumed sublimity as a birthright, and had it in unapproachable possession.

On the 28th of June, Mr. Sheridan lost his wife, a lady of great personal loveliness, and possessing talent as a singer, which her husband, in his greatest need, would not consent should be exhibited for hire. She was, perhaps, the purest and sweetest vocalist of the English school. But the name of Linley is of great celebrity in musical science. Her portrait, by Sir Joseph Reynolds, is elegant, and yet simple: singing and accompanying herself. He has caught her expression so happily, that I have no doubt he *heard* as well as saw, his most accomplished sitter.

The novelties of the summer season were of no moment: the manager himself was not ready, and Covent Garden had

literally taken all that had any promise in the market. Just as the dog-days were over, on the 15th of August, Miss Decamp undertook Macheath, and the courtship of two such enormous jilts as old Bannister and Johnstone in Polly and Lucy. She acquitted herself with great spirit, and evidently surprised the audience with the extent of her musical powers.

After sustaining the heroines of English opera for 14 years, Mrs. Bannister, now seriously engaged with the cares of her young family, determined to retire, and on the 5th September, took her leave of the public on the same spot where, in the year 1778, she first received their applause. Any thing like their censure, she had never for a moment experienced. There was an appearance of timidity constantly about her efforts; but her voice had great compass and sweetness, and her shake was pure and liquid.

Bannister returned thanks at the end of the season, and in the name of the proprietor invited the public next year to the present cottage, after they had enjoyed the splendid palaces prepared for the winter. He also thanked them for Lingo, a part to which he had succeeded on the death of Edwin.

CHAPTER VI.

Holland's new Covent Garden Theatre.—Riot at the new prices.—The Pirates.—Morton's play of Columbus.—Morton and Reynolds compared together.—Kemble highly dissatisfied with Sheridan.—Power of that great man.—Murder of the French monarch.—Kemble and his sister at Colman's.—Every One has his Fault.—Mrs. Jordan.—Anna.—Forced on Mr. Kemble.—The author's own debut.—The Prize.—Murphy's sisters.—Particularly examined out of respect to him.—Murphy's figure.—Mr. Kemble's prologue for his Play.—False Colours.—Armourer.—How to grow Rich.—Mrs. Jordan's Lady Restless.—Mrs. Gibbs.—London Hermit.—Mr. Kemble's Octavian.—Its picturesque power.—Great effects in it.—Settlement with the manager.

Mr. Harris thought that the rise of prices, which had become absolutely necessary, would be at all events better justified by an obvious and recent expense. He therefore determined to make his innovation in his new building; and Mr. Holland had constructed, in the recess, a theatre in the lyral form, rather solid than light in its appearance, and of which the fronts of the boxes bulged something in the curve of a ship's side. The effect was grand and imposing, as to the tiers and number of the boxes; but the gallery called the first, or two shilling gallery, had been hoisted up to the mansions of the gods; and those turbulent deities were indiscreetly banished the house altogether. The solitary shilling, however splendid, was disdained in the new establishment. This plan insulted two classes of frequenters. The *gout de comparaison* leads people to be tolerably content with their own position, while they see another worse. But when the persons who used to inhabit the first gallery, coming down as it did upon the roof of the lower boxes, saw themselves hoisted over three tiers, and scarcely able to see the actors, or what alone was of much moment, their faces; when they saw, too, no misery beyond their own; they could not but feel, that their modest quota had subjected them to contempt; and that they were to be worse treated than they had been, simply because their pockets had been spared. Thus the very humble man was denied his amusement altogether; and the next

class was put into a worse situation, where every thing but his own condition seemed improved. As I cannot report the confusion of Babel, I shall say little as to the riot on the first night—the cat-call, the legitimate pipe of displeasure, that gives

"Order to sounds confused,"

was triumphant in the strife, and the actors played unheard. Lewis was singularly qualified for the situation in which, as stage-manager, he now found himself: there was a frankness about him that testified to the honest truth that came from him. He was firm, as a gentleman always is; and with much tact seized upon a point, about which nobody in the house cared a rush, and assured the audience, that a *shilling gallery* should be erected as speedily as possible. By the third night all opposition slept in peace, and it was established that for the future, the gentle tenants of the boxes should pay their six shillings for admission, and the frequenters of the pit three shillings and sixpence each person. After a slight arithmetical difficulty, as to the amount of specie that would be required to be provided at the pit-door, in which it was luckily ascertained, that three persons came to just half a guinea, and required no change; and that a shilling, added to half a crown, certainly produced three and sixpence; the new rate was found rather a convenience than otherwise. As the prelude with which the new theatre opened was withdrawn on the third night along with the disturbance, what it was about has never transpired. The influence of association is powerful over most minds; was it therefore his courage or his fears that made Mr. Harris open his expensive theatre with the Road to Ruin? Twenty-five thousand pounds were said to be expended upon this new erection; and yet when fifteen years after, it was destroyed by fire, it was said that it could not have stood many years longer. But the mysteries of architecture are like those of its moral mimic, free-masonry, and are totally dark to the uninitiated. Mr. Pope had returned this season to Covent Garden, and the high favour of the manager. But upon his assuming Evander in the Grecian Daughter, the feelings of F. Aicken were hurt, and he threw up his engagement. A very pleasing loyal farce, called Hartford Bridge, by Mr. Pierce, was acted on the 3d of November, and was very frequently repeated.

Cobb and Storace had been again at work on an opera for Drury Lane in the Haymarket, and the 21st of November it came out under the title of the Pirates. The music was much

applauded; as to the interest, it may be sufficient in "the hurly," as Shakspeare writes, to say, that Kelly, Suett, Sedgwick, Bannister, Dignum, Wewitzer, acted the parts they had been playing all their acting lives, and that Mrs. Crouch, Mrs. Bland, Signora Storace and Miss Decamp, were equally fortunate. Such pieces, with us, are indeed "pegs to hang *notes* upon," a little changing the application of an ingenious pleasantry. Mr. Cobb, though a man of business, kept his dramatic carnival with great regularity, and contributed very essentially to the public amusement. In private life Mr. Cobb was particularly decorous and amiable. By the directors of the East India Company, he was always highly respected; and they were liberal enough to think that a man might be an excellent secretary for India affairs, though he was an open and diligent cultivator of the drama. I suppose, before the Board, he must, after his operas, have presented himself like the prologue in Henry the Eighth.

> "I come no more to make you laugh; things now,
> That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
> We shall present."

I am next to notice the first dramatic offering of not merely a speaking acquaintance, but an old and intimate friend. On the 1st December 1792, appeared the play of Columbus, written by Thomas Morton, and brought out at Covent Garden Theatre with such aids of scenery and decoration as a brilliant and foreign subject required, and the confidence of the manager in his author led him to supply. His old schoolfellow Holman is said to have taken some part of the dialogue upon him, and exerted himself in the performance with that ardour which in truth it was not possible for him to want. It is unnecessary to detail the plot of a play so well known as this; but the combination of Alonzo and Cora, with the grand incident of Columbus, it should be recollected, was not caught by Morton from Kotzebue, but evinced his own early knowledge of dramatic effect. To employ the talent of Lewis was a temptation that suggested the excrescence of Harry Herbert, an Englishman following the fortunes of Columbus. Some of his comic business seemed exotic, and transplanted from the British Isles; though a lawyer and a physician commonly find their way into every variety of climate; but I fear seldom attended with the pleasantries of Munden and Quick.

Although this piece is by no means upon a level with the maturer efforts of Morton, yet it was a highly creditable commencement, and announced a mind of which the bent was

decidedly dramatic, fertile in combinations, and looking strongly to character. Authors are commonly supposed to be an irritable and usually a selfish race. It is to the credit of Morton, and Reynolds, and Holman, that their rivalry never disturbed their friendship; they commonly consulted together in their difficulties, and promoted each other's success as fervently as if they had divided receipts.

Morton never had the industry of Reynolds, and like him had avoided the engagement of a regular profession. He had, however, a secure reliance in the liberal affection of his uncle, Mr. Maddison, and his expectations at that gentleman's death might have been realised into positive independence, had not the benevolence of that excellent man extended itself in all directions, and but little been recovered of what was lent on slight or no security. Morton, however, could wait better than his friend the temptings of a good dramatic subject, and write at leisure, when he did find himself in the vein. Reynolds had no sooner ascertained the profits of one play, than he turned in with invincible perseverance to the composition of another, which was "no less material to him" than the former. And, in fact, in the space of twenty-four years, he produced six-and-twenty dramatic offerings, of which only four were indifferently received. Morton, in the same period of time, had written only a third part of the number. But he had more of the artist about him than his gay friend, and with better plots laid his interest deeper in the passions. He never would admit himself to be excited by any thing but the hope of gain, and always pleasantly ridiculed the ambition that looked to fame as its pre-eminent reward. It was no uncommon thing for Morton to receive a thousand pounds for a comedy: and looking at the transaction as one merely commercial, it was worth a manager's while, even at such a rate, to secure his powerful assistance. The dramatic writers of the present day, repressed by the more prominent claims of the *equestrian* order, are narrowed to a badly paid 300*l.*; or, as the spirit of some lawyer arranged it, 33*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* for nine nights: there was a tradition, that a one-and-twentieth night once ensured a further benevolence,

> "But WHEN,
> Extends beyond their catalogue."

Mr. Kemble, as it has been stated, found himself greatly annoyed in his management; and he attributed his impediments to the indolence, often—oftener, I think, to the yielding good humour, of Sheridan. He was, with the greatest

difficulty, induced to retain his situation. Matters were carried, in defiance of his judgment, and thus there were persons encouraged to contemn his authority. I was present one night in Suffolk Street, when he denounced his fixed, his unalterable determination. He expected Sheridan there after the house should be up, and aware of the great disarming powers of the orator, in a sort of inarticulate murmur, alarmed the party with a prospect of a scene; and as some very excellent claret was near him, he proceeded to fortify himself for the engagement. At length Sheridan arrived, took his place next to Mrs. Crouch at the table, looked at Kemble with kindness, but the kindness was neither returned nor acknowledged. The great actor now looked unutterable things, and occasionally emitted a *humming* sound like that of a bee, and groaned in the spirit inwardly. Crouch whispered two words in Sheridan's ear, which let him know, I believe, the *exact* cause of the present moody appearance of his manager. A considerable time elapsed, and frequent repetitions of the sound before mentioned occurred; when at last, "like a pillar of state," slowly up rose Kemble, and in these words addressed the astonished proprietor. "I am an EAGLE, whose wings have been bound down by frosts and snows; but now I shake my pinions, and cleave into the general air, unto which I am born." He then deliberately resumed his seat, and looked as if he had relieved himself from insupportable thraldom. Sheridan knew the complacency of man under the notion of a fine figure, and saw that his eagle was not absolutely irreclaimable; he rose, took a chair next to the great actor; in two minutes resumed his old ascendency. The tragedian soon softened into his usual forgiving temper; and I am ashamed to say how late it was when, cordial as brothers, I took one arm of Kemble, and Sheridan the other, and resolutions were formed "that melted as breath into the passing wind."

And such WAS the power of Sheridan upon this and every occasion. With Kemble he might be said to have a friend in the citadel, for that good man's veneration for him was extreme; and most certainly I never heard him speak with equal warmth of any other existing talent. Of politics he knew absolutely nothing; of passing events scarcely any thing. Newspaers he did not read: so that when I occasionally repeated to him, what I had heard from Mr. Pitt, or read in the publications of Burke, he always recurred to his grand theme, the eloquence of Sheridan; and, as Mrs. Kemble often said, on that subject he was an inveterate idolater. Yet he sometimes threw off his allegiance. "I know him thorough-

ly," he said; "all his sophistry, all his paltry artifices—but I will become a member of his own society, the FRIENDS of the PEOPLE; and when he rises to speak, I'll PUT HIM DOWN." These were only the ebullitions of disappointed attachment and rooted affection; and having persuaded himself of a very extraordinary likeness that Sheridan bore to the countenance of Shakspeare, I incline to think, if Mr. Kemble had formed a scale of which the author of Hamlet was at the summit, the next degree, among the fervours of genius, would have been occupied by the author of the School for Scandal.

Upon the arrival of that intelligence, which struck every liberal mind with horror, I mean the murder of Louis the Sixteenth, Mr. Kemble properly closed his theatre. On the 24th of January, 1793, there was no play. Copied, as this atrocity was, from one which stains the annals of England, there result, from comparing the two events, some circumstances in our favour. Charles had appealed to arms—Louis was the most pacific of monarchs; and we had the decency, at all events, to let our monarch die like a gentleman. We did not force him to die a "living death" in the dirty heartless persecution of his confinement.

"Let me be cruel, not unnatural."

The Italian Opera being now arranged, and requiring possession of its own stage, Mr. Kemble and his sister, on the 26th, performed the characters of Hastings and Shore at the little theatre. This temporary occupation of his theatre led Mr. Kemble to the knowledge of the subject Mr. Colman was now treating, and he decided that nobody should act the Octavian of the Mountaineers but himself. The effect of that determination, as it respected the play, and subsequently the friendship between the poet and the actor, shall be told in due, that is, the summer season.

That ingenious satirist, Mr. Sneer, in the Critic, gives the following account of a comedy, which he introduces to Dangle's patronage, under the title of the *The Reformed Housebreaker*, and the author it seemes, had discovered, "that the faults and foibles of society are subjects unworthy the notice of the comic muse, who should be taught to stoop only at the greater vices and blacker crimes of humanity—gibbeting capital offences in five acts, and pillorying petty larcenies in two—in short, his idea is to dramatize the penal laws, and make the stage a court of ease to the Old Bailey." We were making hasty strides to release the new species of comedy. On the 29th of this month, the tragi-comedy of

Every One has his Fault, by Mrs. Inchbald, was acted with great applause at Covent Garden. The interest here is in a Captain Irvin, who, having married the daughter of Lord Norland, betakes himself to America to repair his circumstances, and comes back desperate at his ill success. His mind settles upon suicide, and he goes to a coffee-house to commit the act; but his better genius holds his hand, and in his way back to his lodging, he merely robs his father-in-law of his pocket-book, and a large quantity of stage bank-notes which it contains. But he is irresolute as to property as he had been with regard to life, and returns the stolen goods by a servant. The messenger, tempted by the large reward for the apprehension of the robber, first gives information as to the thief, and then himself runs away with the money. The peer is relentless, and resolves to prosecute, and the only evidence against Irvin is the pocket-book, which his father-in-law is himself possessed of. (The new court has some singular notions as to evidence.) But even this sheet-anchor of vengeance is destined to break away from him, for Irvin's son, whom he had adopted on the condition that he should disclaim his father, has the parental tendency as to pocket-books, and from motives of pure humanity brings it to Lady Caroline Irvin. He is immediately rewarded by the amazing discovery, that the wife of the robber is his own mother. Lord Norland enters, and is immoveable; the youth determines to remain with his mother. After many vain attempts to reconcile this unhappy family, Mr. Harmony succeeds by a pretended letter from the daughter, announcing her husband's death. The old blockhead repents of his cruelty, and poetical justice is achieved by a *compromise of the felony*. Whether the search after great strength of interest, such as the above, has had a tendency to refine or debase the national taste, is a question which I have no right to determine. Pure comedy cannot be written on easier terms, than much observation of character and manners, and an elegant and pointed dialogue, if the portion of wit should fall below the abundance of Congreve and Sheridan. The German drama, however, was happily at hand to solve this and all other doubts as to dramatic composition, and settle us in a region of monstrous incidents and false morals, from which our escape is little to be expected. Satisfied with our new masters, we have learned to invent in their taste, and indeed our original productions might be almost taken for translations. The melo-drama, pure from the German, or the germanished French stages, is the principal ornament of our splendid national theatres.

Mr. Kemble always did his utmost to keep down this rage

after novelty, but he found it beyond his power. Mrs. Jordan was ambitious to be written for, and not very careful as to the competence of the author. Nay, she was reported to have written herself a considerable part of the comedy of Anna, in which she made her first appearance.

This piece had been literally forced upon Kemble, and he resented it strongly. He had told the parties concerned that there was nothing in it, and that it really wasted the time employed in the rehearsals. The Jordan triumphed until the night of its appearance, the 25th of February; but long before the fall of the curtain, the fate of her friend's comedy was irrevocably sealed. The fable was utterly without interest—the only character an amorous old mother; and the dialogue distinguished only by its vulgarity. But I have shown "a touch of Harry in the night." I have exhibited Mr. Kemble in his mood, upon such an insult to his judgment and his authority.

On the 2d of March, Miss Decamp acted, in a very interesting manner, the character of Adelaide in the Count of Narbonne. I notice it, not because there were any indications of first-rate power in tragedy, but because there was fine deportment, good sense, and just feeling; and as she knelt before Mrs. Siddons, the illusion was perfect; she could scarcely be thought any thing but her daughter.

Mr. Boaden, in reading the Guzman d'Alfrache, or Spanish Rogue, had thought that the story of Ozmyn and Daraxa might take the form of an opera, and afford an opportunity to display the musical science of his young friend Atwood. He therefore applied some leisure hours to it, and Mr. Sheridan gaily told him, "that his songs were better written, than any which he had read since the Duenna." How far this compliment was justified, he has now no means of estimating. Sheridan paid him faithfully for the piece, of which the author, happy as he was, kept no copy.

Storace's benefit had the attraction of an excellent farce from the pen of Prince Hoare—The Prize, or 2528. The astonishment of Bannister, when he read the letter from the lottery office—his re-commencement of the letter—his laugh—his extasy, are vivid in my recollection, and among the most amusing instances of his peculiar talent. While plain farce was permitted to hold up the train of Shakspeare and Otway, of Southern and Rowe, no farce was oftener repeated than the Prize; and Bannister with 10,000*l.* transferring his business of an apothecary to such a journeyman as Suett, with the finished style of Storace as a singer, formed a "good,

night" of no very sentimental, but certainly most exhilarating character.

Mr. Kemble had a great respect for the veteran Murphy, and had looked over his tragedy of the Rival Sisters, written in 1783, and published with his other writings in 1786, but till then, as I understood him, never seen by managers. The subject is that of Ariadne supplanted by her sister Phædra, and abandoned by Theseus, whom she had saved from the labyrinth of Minos. It had been treated by the younger Corneille under the title of Ariane, and written in the short space of 40 days, in the year 1672. It should be observed that the conduct of Ariane vastly resembles that of Andromaque by Racine, in 1667, and as Voltaire wrote with so obvious a leaning to Racine, I wonder he did not point out Corneille's obligation to that fine poet. He speaks of Ariane as one of the happiest subjects of antiquity, greatly superior to that of Dido, who has done nothing for Eneas, and is not betrayed by her sister. He throws out a careless touch of his penetration, in accounting for the success of the play. "Les hommes, tout ingrats qu'ils sont, s'intéressent toujours à une femme tendre, abandonnée par un ingrat; et les femmes, qui se retrouvent dans cette peinture, pleurent sur elles-mêmes." The famous La Champmêlé in Ariane excited the tears of Madame de Sevigné, and those of the Lafayettes of her brilliant day; and it might have been expected, Mrs. Siddons would prove equally attractive in the English Adriane. But attention could be secured only six nights, which I would fain not impute to any indifference to the subject merely because it was classical. In looking carefully for some cause of its slender effect, I think I find one in the unsupported situation of the heroine—she has no confidante in the English play, and consequently no obvious female sympathy. The value of such a personage is very distinctly seen in the Anna of Lady Randolph: the heroine is there reflected by a faithful mirror. Mrs. Siddons had collisions only with Periander and Pirithous in her scenes of doubt and apprehension, and the effect was hard and tiresome. The fourth act, however, had some noble agonies of tragic passion. Theseus is in truth a most contemptible scoundrel. Fate is the principle on which he excuses his Romeo-like fickleness, and black ingratitude. This is sufficiently in Grecian manners; but should have been attributed to the wrath of some divinity. The language of Murphy is too little like common speech; he has no finely-felt yielding to colloquial terms, which leaving dignity to sustain itself, secure the effect of passion, by going direct to the heart. It was rather late, too, in his life, to compose a tragedy, and a few marks of

careless diction shall be pointed out for the use of the poetical student; and an occasional happiness in thought or expression, from sincere respect to the worthy author, whom, though in his decline only, I had the happiness to know. In the 4th act Ariadne makes her exit,

> "Wild as the tempest's rage,
> As if a conflagration of the soul
> To madness fir'd her brain."

And yet the speaker fears that

> "She went to brood in *secret*—to *think*."

Surely the apprehension of her destruction was more likely, in so alarming a state of excitement. People brood in melancholy; in despair they rave, and frenzy, and destroy. In the same scene Phædra, in two following speeches, slabbers out the common place nothingness of exclamation,—

> "It is *too much*,
> *Too much*, to bear this agony of mind."

Pirithous interposes but three lines, and Phædra again rejoins her usual—

> "No more; it is *too much*."

A little further on we have the misery of epithet *useless*, because previously implied—

> "*Instructed* how to roll the *bidden* glance."

He deals too in perpetual *asides*. I think I never observed such a series as Phædra presents us with. Enough of slight faults.

Burke has somewhere in his works a fine passage of the approximations by which a politician finally changes his party. Murphy uses it to a noble moral purpose.

> "*Pirithous* Beware, beware of the deceitful garb
> That vice too oft assumes. The first approach,
> With bland allurements, with insidious mein,
> Wears the delusive semblance of some virtue.
> The siren spreads her charms, and fancy lends
> Her thousand hues to deck the lurking crime.
> "OPINION *changes;* 'tis no longer guilt;
> 'Tis amiable weakness, generous frailty,
> Involuntary error." On we rush;
> The sophistry of vice deludes us all."

In the ravings of his heroine, he has contrived to give that aching stretch of thought incident to her feeling, a very high degree of poetical beauty.

> "Or blow me hence upon the warring winds
> To climes unknown beyond the verge of nature,
> To the remotest planet in the void;
> That never, never can approach this world;
> But rolling onward, farther, farther still,
> Holds in the wilds of space its fated round."

It is easy here to conceive the piercing intensity of Mrs. Siddon's gaze, as if she followed with her eye the illimitable track. I have only room for a happy remembrance of Shakspeare's arrangement in Lear—"I never gave you kingdom." &c.

Ariadne (to *Periander.*)

> "Why do you smile upon me;
> I never serv'd YOU; never sav'd YOUR life;
> Made YOU no promise: why should YOU deceive me?"

He has another imitation of Shakspeare in Romeo and Juliet, and one remembrance of Horace and his translator, Milton. I linger over this last production of the last of the Romans. Murphy lived among us uncontaminated by our fashions, the fine old gentleman of a former age. There was something about his lofty figure, to which all classes paid respect; but his costume excited the same attention, as when, from a crowded levy, we see a gentleman in a court dress hurry through the street. His great happiness in the decline of life was, that he had assigned himself a task; and before he went to rest, something was daily or nightly to be done towards the complete translation of his favourite historian, TACITUS. Thus, though nearly left in solitude, his solitude was never cheerless. Steevens used to annoy him by insidious attacks in the newspapers, and call upon him to see his countenance while he read them; but Murphy knew him as well as Sir John Hawkins did; though the plays of the former might not suffer so much, as the history of music, from the criticisms of the modern Zoïlus.

To the play of the Rival Sisters Mr. Kemble himself contributed a prologue: as it was a production in the maturity of his mind, and he did not often lend this sort of aid, I shall lay it before the reader; for being written subsequently to the publication of the play, it has never accompanied that to

which it forms so suitable an introduction; and very few except his particular friends, know even that he wrote one.

MR. KEMBLE'S PROLOGUE TO THE RIVAL SISTERS.

Spoken by Mr. Wroughton.

Whene'er the poet, in retiring vein,
Proclaims his purpose ne'er to write again,
The threaten'd town interprets the kind way,
And takes an interest in his *next* last play.

Not that our bard has play'd you fast and loose,
Or pleads his general candour for excuse;
He dares not trifle with the public sense,
But thinks such folly downright impudence:
Brought, not advancing, since he then appears,
To risk the well-worn fame of forty years,
He trusts distinct indulgence you'll afford—
Not he, but Ariadne, breaks his word.

From ancient stores we take our plot to-night,
Form'd on the mournful tale of Theseus' flight;
The time, that golden Æra, some relate,
When equal Minos rul'd the Cretan state.

Hail, holy sage, who taught'st licentious man
To find his freedom where the laws began;
Whose fame in arms, redoubted from afar,
From thine own shores deterr'd invasive war—
Whilst thy mild genius o'er a prosperous isle
Gave every GOOD and every GRACE to smile;
'Till thine to all thy subjects were as dear,
As GEORGE'S virtues to his Britons here.

To all our author bids me humbly bend,
But deprecate no foe, and court no friend:
With grateful pride he thinks of honours past,
And hopes you'll bid those valued honours last.
Freely to you he now commends his cause—
Should he deserve—you'll not withhold applause.

Mr. Kemble himself acted the character of Pirithous—he therefore held in his own grasp the difficult disclosure to Ariadne of the baseness of Theseus. He neither expected nor wished to make a splendid effect for himself in this play, but gave the crown to Ariadne---

"Tenues volat illa per auras."

On the 3d of April, Mr. Morris, a barrister, ultimately a Master in Chancery, whom I used occasionally to meet, brought out a comedy at the Haymarket, called False Colours. It was neatly, if not powerfully written; but his legal preferment withdrew certainly no Congreve from the

comic muse. The veteran Cumberland again ventured one of his hurried compositions, a comic opera called the Armourer; the music by an amateur. But it lived only three nights, though the names of the actors alone did a great deal for it. But Covent Garden easily repaired its failures---the activity of Mr. Harris was always provided. On the 18th, Reynolds was again before the town, with the peculiar secret *How to grow Rich*, and he cleared by that comedy 620*l*. The author now boldly attacked the fashionable *income* of Faro Banks, and the splendid *accommodations* of a well-known sheriff's officer; and frolicked his way through life, as he saw it, to the infinite amusement of the town. In the epilogue I remember Lewis produced a lady's *pad* from under his coat; and the house had been drilled into such excellent temper through the evening, that the prominence was received with convulsions of merriment. Any thing so gay, so irresistible as Lewis upon such an occasion, I have never seen.

A few farces, not worth specifying, carried the two great theatres through their season, and Mrs. Jordan acted Lady Restless for the first time, in All in the Wrong. This performance on her own brilliant night, was certainly not for her own *benefit:* she was nothing like the character. The charm of Jordan was in a sort of comic *enjoyment* of her own personal situation in the piece. But she loved to see herself in elegant comedy, and had no sort of reluctance to the tender heroines of tragedy; though she neither had, nor could assume the high tone of manners characteristic of the former, and still less what Racine, a fine critic as well as poet, calls "cette tristesse majestueuse," which produces our whole delight in the latter.

The Haymarket, on the 15th of June, had the good fortune to repossess Mrs. Gibbs, an actress who, by unpretending diligence and fine temper, has gone through even a theatrical life without an enemy; and, below professional greatness, been for many years one of the greatest supports of a theatre. In the recollections of my intercourse with theatrical persons, many a pleasing image rises of this kind, unaffected woman; who, with very considerable acquirements, and much accurate study of her art, is yet more admired for the cheerfulness of her mind, and the goodness of her heart.

The pen of O'Keefe has seldom been more ludicrously employed than in delineating the *London Hermit*, and his rambles in Dorsetshire. Johnstone in Tully, and his "describing book," and the "devil of a hermit," and a crowd of pleasantries, revive at the mere title of the piece; which proved

extremely attractive, and ascertained that in the Irish character Johnstone never had a rival. The London Hermit was first acted on the 29th of June.

I now come to a very important feature in Mr. Kemble's dramatic life—the performance of Octavian in the Mountaineers. By whatever epithet his other characters might be distinguished, I should decidedly term Octavian the most *picturesque*. The author and the actor seem to have asked themselves, how best a series of portraits of expressive misery could be diversified and arranged; and never was an author's conception more extended and exalted, than the Octavian of Colman was in the performance of Mr. Kemble. True, it occupies scarcely so much as the latter half of the play; but it bursts upon you with fine effect, after the very Shakspearian preparation of the scene between the two goatherds.

Octavian is not Cordenio—he has more of the misanthropy of Timon: the address of the latter to the *sun* perhaps suggested that of Octavian. His uniform sensibility as to woman, forms a delightful contrast with his rough and usually savage treatment of his own sex. On the sudden entrance of Agnes to part him and Sadi, Kemble's exclamation, "Woman!" was, in tone and look, a volume—his assumption of the new office of torch-bearer before the votaries of true love —his ardent look and various action, his costume, his firm step, his thrilling enthusiasm—

"O! wander, boundless love, across the wild!"

the revulsion upon the murder of his own peace—the words "and with it pluck'd out hope!"—the slight pause "Well, well, no matter,"—and the swell of his chest, and the vigorous action of his head and throat at the words—

"Despair burns high within me"—

if they have not been seen, will never be conceived, until such another countenance and person arise, to execute the fine conception of the poet. Perhaps greater effect was never produced than in the satirical scene with the goatherd—"the road to one poor ducat." The agitation and the caution in taking the picture from his bosom—the limner—

"As the dull clod unmov'd did stare upon thee"—

a bitter, lover-like rebuke of the usual absorption of artists,

not in the sitter, but the picture—not the beauty of the original, but how it is to be translated into the language of art.

I am tracing the power of Mr. Kemble, and only incidentally here insist upon the poet's talent. Few men have written better than the passage upon the countenance of Roque: it is modelled after the antique, and Shakspeare would not have disdained it.

> "No—Providence has slubber'd it in haste.
> 'Tis one of her unmeaning compositions
> She manufactures when she makes a gross.
> She'll form a million such—and all alike—
> Then send them forth, asham'd of her own work,
> And set no mark upon them."

The actor again showed his mastery in the art by the tone and manner of

> "Give me thy hand, Roque."—

and the expression of hopeless sorrow, when he faltered out "I'm past jesting with"—the interview with Floranthe—his fainting at her feet—the melancholy—

> "It has chanc'd, *before*,
> That I have dream't this.—"

the hysteric laugh, and the modulation of the voice in

> "I shall weep soon, and then I shall be better."

To which should be added the characteristic glow at the last—

> "For no man else could I restrain the transport
> That gushes on my soul, when I have pull'd,
> At last, one flinty father to my feet."

I have paid my tribute, thus, to the actor's genius. As to the author, what more need I say, than that his *greatest* power is in the Mountaineers? His diction is occasionally stiffened, by what are now the expletives, *do* and *did*:—his fable is not well involved, and has no unity. His two incidents follow each other, as they do in the Sierra Morena; and upon the whole he has not business for more than his three short acts. Had he amplified his fable, and strengthened his dramatis personæ, the reign of George the Third would have produced a tragedy, which in passion and character, in sentiment and poetic diction, was worthy of the brightest period of dramatic literature.

After the complete success of the play, the rival geniuses, whose convivial were quite upon a par with any of their other powers, sat down to enjoy their triumph. Octavian on this occasion relinquished his proud boast—

"Thou hot and rolling sun, I rise *before* thee"—

for he had been many hours in his course before Kemble rose from this perfect celebration. I saw the piece several times during its run, but found little change in his manner. He had by meditation so settled the part in his mind, that the successive representations were only stronger or fainter impressions of the same design.

What remained was an affair of business, seldom pleasant. Kemble, in his love for Octavian, had sacrificed much of the usual produce of his summer. Colman could not afford the *worth* of the performance; his season was short—his receipts moderate. What he could do, he did—he proposed the following basis of settlement between Mr. Kemble and himself. "Put me as the author of a new play out of the question. Let it be supposed that the sole attraction is yourself. Look then at the receipts during the whole number of nights—by Cocker, so MUCH. Then take a worn-out play, the 'Battle of Hexham,' if you will, for the same number of nights—deduct the second from the first, and let us divide the difference." There can be no doubt that Mr. Kemble would have gotten five times the sum, had he listened to the offers made to him by the country theatres: but looking to his FAME, the diversification afforded by a character so peculiar, so great and original, was worth the sacrifice, large as it was, which had been made to it. Disappointment certainly was expressed upon the subject on the one part, and much regretted on the other.

CHAP. VII.

Mrs. Radcliffe's Romance of the Forest.—Mr. Boaden dramatises it.—How to dress a Ghost.—Mr. Harris's reception of the play, and its author.—New Drury.—Mr. Kemble's taste in Scenery.—Mr. Capon selected.—His knowledge and unwearied pains.—Mr. Kemble's Perfect Collection of the Drama.—Drury at Colman's in the winter of 1793-4.—Morton's Children in the Wood.—Miss Poole's Ophelia.—Hamlet Drest a la Vandyke at Covent Garden.—The Pictures in the Play.—Munden in Polonius.—Mr. Kemble in Young Marlow.—Bannister, jun.—Bold Stroke for a Wife.—Richard Tickell.—Mrs. Webb dies.—Miss Leake.—Dreadful accident at Colman's.—Novelties.—The Grand National Theatre opened.—The author's Fontainville Forest.—Ludicrous night rehearsal of it.—Remonstrates with Mr. Harris.—New effect.—Drury opens for Plays with Macbeth.—Banishment of Banquo's Ghost.—Mr. Charles Kemble in Malcolm.—Prologue and Epilogue.—The Jew by Cumberland.—Bannister.—Bishop Watson's opinion of Cumberland as a Logician.—Mr. Pye.—Mr. H. Siddons.—Lodoiska done by Mr. Kemble.—Glorious First of June.—Summer Season.—Palmer in Octavian.—Death of the elder Colman.

Mr. Boaden had read the Romance of the Forest with great pleasure, and thought that he saw there the groundwork of a drama of more than usual effect. He admired, as every one else did, the singular address by which Mrs. Radcliffe contrived to impress the mind with all the terrors of the ideal world; and the sportive resolution of all that had excited terror into very common natural appearances: indebted for their false aspect to circumstances, and the overstrained feelings of the characters.

But, even in romance, it may be doubtful, whether there be not something *ungenerous* in thus playing upon poor timid human nature, and agonizing it with false terrors. The disappointment is, I know, always resented, and the laboured explanation commonly deemed the flattest and most uninteresting part of the production. Perhaps, when the attention

is once secured and the reason yielded, the passion for the marvellous had better remain unchecked; and an interest selected from the olden time be entirely subjected to its gothic machinery. However this may be in respect of romance, when the doubtful of the narrative is to be exhibited in the *drama*, the decision is a matter of necessity. While *description* only fixes the inconclusive dreams of the fancy, she may partake the dubious character of her inspirer; but the pen of the dramatic poet must turn every thing into shape, and bestow on these "airy nothings a local habitation and a name."

Notwithstanding, therefore, his alarm at venturing within that circle, which none but Shakspeare had hitherto trodden with success, Mr. Boaden decided to make his experiment, and ascertain whether the failure of others had not proceeded from defective preparation as to the supernatural incident, or from its imperfect or vulgar exhibition. I have, early in this work, stated my opinion, that nothing ever was more tasteless than the stage exhibition of the Ghost in Hamlet. The great author has written with his highest power: he has displayed unbounded knowledge of effect: he has given to frequent repetition the absolute power of novelty; and yet, as far as the royal shade himself is concerned, all this charm is dispelled by the heavy, bulky, creaking substantiality of the spirit. Whereas the whole of this "gracious figure" should look as if it was collected from the surrounding air, and ready, when its impression should be made, to melt into "thin air" again.

Perhaps the sublimest of painting is the figure of the Royal Dane, as he appeared in the large composition of Mr. Fuseli for the Shakspeare Gallery. It has what seems person, invested in what seems to be armour; it bears the regal sceptre; its countenance is human in its lineaments, though it inspires more awe than mere humanity can excite. How is all this produced? By recollecting some of the known principles of the sublime. By the artifices of the pallet; by keeping down all too positive indications of substance; by the choice of a cold slaty prevalent colour, touched slightly with the pale silvery tone of moonlight; by a step gigantic in its extent, and action of the most venerable dignity and command.

How far the author might be able to get such an effect attempted upon the stage was matter of much anxiety. He wrote his play with some care, he thinks, as to the diction (for he has never read it since); and after taking the opinion of certain friends and brother authors, he sent his work to

Mr. Harris, to whom, at that time, he had not the honour to be known. It is now with a mournful pleasure he retraces the interview he had with that gentleman in the library of his house at Knightsbridge—the smile with which he first of all announced his acceptance of the play; and then the peculiar glance of thought he turned upon me, when he proceeded to rid me of some obvious encumbrances to the action, sundry useless characters, and enforced the duties of compression, or explanation, or omission—all which, he said, long experience, rather than critical study, had discovered to him. There was a benevolence, a paternity in his manner, that won my entire confidence. A few alterations I had to make, but they were easily done. The author took his play home, not *back*, and left his new friend, the manager, happy beyond measure, sure that his play would be acted in the coming season, and really but little fearing the grand ordeal of the public.

I anticipate the reader's curiosity, whether, enjoying the honour of Mr. Kemble's friendship, I made him acquainted with the subject that now occupied me? Unquestionably I did, and he advised me to be satisfied with nothing less than a five-act play. As the subject presented itself to me, I did not see the possibility of working out the leading character to an importance worthy of *his* great talent; and as to the heroine, I had no view beyond the powers of a young actress, the wife of a friend; but all my arrangements of this kind were set aside by the policy of the theatre; the manager told me who *must* act the principal male and female part of my play.

Mr. Kemble at this time did not conceal (at least from *me* he did not) that at Drury Lane Theatre "they did not want plays; the treasures of our ancient authors were inexhaustible. Shewy after-pieces and laughable farces might be necessary; but what could be expected now in the way of the regular drama, that previously had not been better done?" This, to be sure, admitted of no dispute. Mr. Harris, I dare say, thought of the mighty dead with similar respect; but he acted in a way more beneficial to the living: and by steady encouragement of such talent as there was, punctual and even liberal payment, and constant vigilance and forecast, he stood against the greatest mass and variety of talent that ever combined into one dramatic company.

The new theatre was now rapidly advancing to completion; and Mr. Kemble's active mind had full employment in the preparations for the stage itself. As the dimensions of the new theatre were calculated for an audience, the price

of whose admission would amount, even at 6*s.* in the boxes, to more than 700*l.*, it was quite clear that for all grand occasions they would want scenery of a greater height and width than had been exhibited at old Drury: and that in fact but little of the old stock could be used at all. On this occasion it gives me sincere pleasure to mention the very great acquisition Mr. Kemble had met with in an old friend of mine, who really seemed expressly fashioned, as a scene-painter, to carry into effect the true and perfect decorations which he meditated for the plays of Shakspeare: the artist to whom I allude is Mr. William Capon, who has the honour of being draftsman to H. R. H. the Duke of York. Mr. Capon, like his old acquaintance, the late John Carter, was cast in the mould of antiquity; and his passion was, and is, the ancient architecture of this country. With all the zeal of an antiquary, therefore, the painter worked as if he had been upon oath; and as all that he painted for the new theatre perished in the miserable conflagration of it a few years after, I indulge myself in some description of the scenery, which so much interested Mr. Kemble. The artist had a private painting room, and Mr. Kemble used to walk me out with him to inspect the progress of these works which were to be records as well as decorations, and present with every other merit, that for which Kemble was born. —truth.

A chapel of the pointed architecture, which occupied the whole stage, for the performance of the Oratorios, with which the new theatre opened in 1794.

Six chamber wings, of the same order, for general use in our old English plays—very elaborately studied from actual remains.

A view of New Palace Yard, Westminster, as it was in 1793.—41 feet wide, with corresponding wings.

The ancient palace of Westminster, as it was 300 years back, from partial remains and authentic sources of information—put together with the greatest diligence and accuracy—the point of view the S. W. corner of Old Palace Yard. About 42 feet wide, and 34 feet to the top of the scene.

Two very large wings, containing portions of the old palace, which the artist made out from an ancient draught, met with in looking over some records of the augmentation office in Westminster. It was but a pen and ink sketch originally, but though injured by time, exhibited what was true.

Six wings, representing ancient English streets; combinations of genuine remains, selected on account of their picturesque beauty.

The tower of London, restored to its earlier state, for the play of King Richard III.

The late venerable president of the Royal Academy used frequently to honour the artist with a call, and enjoy these scenes of past ages, the accuracy and bold execution of which he greatly commended. Capon, among the other able artists of the theatre, formed a distinct feature, like the *black letter* class of a library. Such, with some modern views, were the first works he executed for the new theatre.

In our conversations, Mr. Kemble now opened to me many of the great improvements that he meditated; and notwithstanding sundry difficulties, which would not always be charmed away, his ambition rose along with the splendid pile of Mr. Holland; and the *grand national theatre* was the term that he not too partially appropriated to the edifice which Mr. Burke thought an encroachment upon the architectural majesty of our temples. Mr. Kemble now steadily pursued his object of forming a complete collection of the drama—the newspapers occasionally reported the large sums given by him for single plays. It became him, he thought, to possess every thing relative to his art, and his collection, at last, was greatly superior to that of his illustrious predecessor, Garrick. To give him ample room, he had enlarged the library of his house in Caroline street, Bedford Square. I speak of him always, I am sure, with respect—but although there was no doubt about the superiority of the house in Great Russel street, I yet fancied him happier in the former than the latter; there was more freedom, fewer guests, less of ceremony, and equal hospitality.

At the commencement of the winter season of 1793–4, the Drury Lane company was obliged to bend under the low roof of the little theatre in the Haymarket, and there was something *affected* in the terms by which this event was announced. It was, in short, "Mr. Colman, jun. having made the necessary arrangements with the *Proprietors of the Drury Lane Patent*, opened the theatre on the 19th of September, *under their authority*, in order that the public might not be deprived of the *advantage* of an *option* of theatrical entertainment, derivable from having a *second play-house* to resort to during the winter months." Perhaps an announcement more *cautious*, and better calculated to still the *alarm* of the Lord Chamberlain, will not easily be found. The advantage of the option too is a lucky discovery. The humility of the term, second *play-house*, so fortunately revived in defiance of the more classical and dignified word THEATRE, must have its share of approbation.

I have already given a slight sketch of Morton, and I think just touched upon that very amiable part of his character which led him to court retirement, and to study nature in her simplest, and perhaps loveliest garb. He was not one of those alluded to by Mr. Addison, who are unable to divest themselves of the little images of ridicule, which are suggested by lowly interest, unadorned by art—In common with that most elegant of critics, he had felt the powerful appeal of the ballad, called "The Children in the Wood," and conceived that by saving the little innocents from the assassin, he should heal the wound he previously made, and not only keep up the interest, but render it delightful. He read his piece to Reynolds, at Chambers, who admired it, and was the bearer of it to Colman; by that gentleman it was accepted, coupled with the condition, that the real author was to be unknown. It was brought out on the 1st of October, and succeeded beyond the most sanguine hopes of the parties. In this unappropriated condition, Rose used to ask how it went off, with a seeming interest in the question; Tom Vaughn did the same thing. Churchill has given the latter gentleman a lift, by making him the trumpeter to Murphy, by the name of Dapper; and he clearly had no indifference to any little fame that was floating about. For the piece itself, it was a most delicious little thing, and exhibited Bannister's genius in the happiest way imaginable. I do not know any part by which he was better appreciated, nor wherein he was more unapproachable. The scene of Walter's heroism fell into the hands of another man of genius, Mr Westall; who preserved a very bold and perfect resemblance of Bannister, in a composition of great interest and beauty.

Morton, I believe, never inquired what Shakspeare's cotemporary, Yarrington, had done with his fable; he was contented with the BALLAD, of which the simplicity, I think, is rather the result of *imitation*, than poverty of poetical sentiment and expression; particularly if the office of the *Robin* be imitated, as, I confess, seems probable, from that of Horace's *doves*.* In stating this to be my opinion as to the *Children in the Wood*, I take the opportunity to extend that opinion to many a ballad, written, as I conceive in the most

* "Till Robin-red-breast piously
Did cover them with leaves."—*Ballad.*

"Fronde nova puerum palumbes
Texere." HORACE, Ode iv. b. 3.

poetical age of our literature, and affecting occasionally the "silly sooth" of traditional expression.

On the 9th of October, at Covent Garden Theatre, Miss Poole, whose fame as a singer was afterwards carried very high indeed, under the name of Dickons, made her first stage appearance in the character of Ophelia. The lovely maniac's "snatches of old lauds"* were on this occasion augmented by the grand cantata "Mad Bess." But Hamlet, on the present night, received a complete dressing in the taste of Vandyke, and has ever since been fixed in costume of black satin and bugles. A new mode of treating the pictures of the late and the present king of Denmark, though applauded by certain critics, was unquestionably wrong. The late king, called the "poison'd prince," was a *half*-length on the wall, and the present a miniature worn by her majesty as a bracelet. Now the words, "*a station*," prove the figure to be standing as Mercury would do, darted down as a herald, and alighted on a lofty eminence. The usurper stood, too, but how? "Like a mildewed ear" of corn, unsightly by the side of one springing up in purity and perfection. The two pictures should be *whole* lengths, the constant furniture of royal apartments, and thus incidentally supplying to Hamlet a powerful, obvious, and undeniable illustration. However, the royal painter of the court of Denmark, must have been a man of primitive sincerity, indeed, to allow the *living ass* to figure so "vilely" by the side of the *dead lion*. The name of the jester on that establishment is happily come down to us; but of the portrait painter we are quite ignorant. Munden, in Polonius, said, I remember, *beatified* Ophelia, instead of *beautified*, and was reproved for his innovation; but he had seen it in Theobald, who started *beatified*, because he thought it more consonant with the other terms applied to Ophelia by Hamlet, "the celestial," and my "soul's idol." Nay, he has assigned, too, a reason, why Polonius called it a *vile* phrase, namely, that, as a catholic, he deemed it profane. Of this emendation Warburton approved, and, I half suspect, had forgotten that it was his own. Of such trifles, more, perhaps, than enough: but when the actors offer their correction to me politely, as the witches did to Macbeth, with a

* This passage is a lively instance of the little taste which has been exerted in the composing a text of Hamlet from the old 4to and the folio 1625. Shakspeare wrote very evidently *lauds*, as the quarto proves; *i. e.* she *chaunted* old *hymns*: nothing can be more regular. The easier, or more common word, *tunes*, is a very imperfect substitute. To chaunt old tunes is literally omitting all *subject* in the melodies. LAUDS should, therefore, be restored as essential to the *meaning* of this tender account of Ophelia's last moments.

> "Say, had'st thou rather hear it from *our* mouths
> Or from our MASTERS?"

I answer always, like the monarch, "Let me see THEM."

Mr. Kemble, on the 15th of the same month, acted for the first time in town, the part of Young Marlow, in the most improbable of all comedies, "She Stoops to Conquer," and surely it must be "meat and drink," indeed, to see a clown, when such a booby savage as Tony Lumpkin, can entertain a civilized assembly.

There was an idle notion once, it appears, "that the profligate man who is at ease with a strumpet, is *abashed* in the society of virtuous women." To have lost the *relish* for goodness is incident to all perseverance in vice: but Marlow is a gentleman and a scholar, who, however incredible the fact, is paralyzed by a silk petticoat, and can neither see nor hear, feel nor comprehend, when he is compelled to stand in the presence of a young gentlewoman.

Such is his disorder, that Miss Hardcastle trusts her *natural* manner in her second dress: and although in her first she literally exhausts herself in brilliant attacks upon Marlow, yet he is quite insensible of the identity. In the Belle's Stratagem, Miss Hardy adopts a total change of voice and manner, in addition to which precautions, she wears a mask, and Doricourt has some excuse for his want of suspicion. Marlow is represented as having neither ear nor eye in the interview: to call any thing MISS, deprives him of his senses. He swallows, too, the extravagant fiction of Lumpkin, and takes Mr. Hardcastle's house for an inn, as if he were as little conversant with gentlemen's houses as with modest women; and is rude and violent in a just proportion to his sheepishness and timidity.

When we sometimes suffer pain from the tremendous critical inflictions of Dr. Johnson, we cannot forbear a degree of astonishment, that he could ever be brought to countenance Goldsmith's comedies; and, one would think, he must have walked out of the theatre, could HE have either *seen* or *heard* *She stoops to Conquer*. The advantage taken of some sentimental comedies, to impress upon us the notion, that this was the "*real* Simon Pure," was well sustained by the Johnson Club, but Garrick did more than all of them together, in his most fortunate Prologue, spoken by Woodward, in deep mourning, one of the happiest approaches in the world to such a structure.

The difficulty once got over, opposed by Kemble's fine intelligent countenance, and Young Marlow being completely out of his "five wits," nothing could be better than Kemble

in the character. I have spoken with great freedom of his comedy; but he acted this part quite as whimsically as it has ever been done.

Bannister, on the 29th of October, acted, for the first time, the character of Col. Feignwell, in the comedy called *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*. His success in the part kept the play upon the stage for a series of years; and it not only took its turn with the *Busy Body* and the *Wonder* of the ingenious author, but it became the constant substitute when any great card failed to play in Drury Lane Theatre.

Richard Tickell, as having, like Sheridan, married into the Linley family, and being also the author of an opera, claims some notice in this place. If he really was a descendant from the Tickell of Addison, the genius of the family, and perhaps more than its genius, had degenerated. Richard has, among the collectors of political *jeux d'esprit*, the fame of a lucky *anticipation* of parliamentary oratory. He was fortunate in one friendship, to which he owed a pension and the appointment of a commissioner of the stamp duties, and the apartments in the palace of Hampton Court, from the window of which he, I fear, threw himself, on the 4th of November, 1795.

The allusion to his illustrious namesake reminds me of the highest ploratory verse in the language: I allude to the lines on the death of Addison. Dr. Johnson thinks the lines upon Cato *skilful*; and I venture to produce his comparison of the illustrious Roman with the aged oak, either as to form or influence, among the most unaffected and happiest efforts of poetry.

> "The aged oak thus rears his head in air,
> His sap exhausted, and his branches bare;
> Midst storms and earthquakes he maintains his state,
> Fixt deep in earth, and fastened by his weight:
> His naked boughs still lend the shepherds aid,
> And his old trunk projects an awful shade."

If he be the real translator of the rival version to Pope's first book of Homer, I can only say that, in the transfusion of Homer, he stiffened his verse, beyond all parallel in his original compositions.

In the passage through our stage seasons, not very often distinguished by genius of our *own* times, I feel happy to select, not, I hope, obtrusively, beauties that must be of ALL times, and which uphold the poetical character of my country.

The stage this year sustained a *heavy* loss in the death of Mrs. Webb. It is perhaps mortifying to a woman ever per-

sonally to excite laughter—a huge hill of flesh surmounted by a front of a fiery fretful expression, and bellowing forth a voice scarcely susceptible of a minor key, is altogether a compound so unsuited to delicate minds, that there should be rich compensation in the genius for the pain ensured by the appearance. In many instances this has decidedly been the case. The class of nurses, Heidelbergs, Malaprops, and Cheshires, has been, from Mrs. Green to Mrs. Davenport, admirably filled.

A very amiable girl and most pleasing singer, Miss Leake, acted Rosetta, at the Haymarket, for the first time, on the 21st of January, 1794. She was a pupil of Dr. Arnold's, and calculated exactly to succeed Storace in English opera. But after every prospect of the most brilliant success in her profession, she was compelled to retire from it by one of those insurmountable attacks upon the organ of execution, which diminished the volume of voice, narrowed its compass, and rendered it feeble and untrue.

On the 3d of February, at Colman's theatre, an accident happened absolutely unparalleled as to its magnitude among the casualties of the play-house. Their Majesties had graciously condescended to enjoy an evening's amusement, with such accommodation as could be given in the little theatre, and they commanded (a rare occurrence) three farces written by one gentleman, Mr. Prince Hoare,—"My Grandmother,"—"No Song no Supper"—and "The Prize."

The opportunity of having so near a view of the royal party rendered the pit an object of particular choice, and an immense crowd was collected in the Haymarket before that *only* entrance to it, and when the door was at last opened, the rush was terrific and overwhelming. If it had been a straight passage, some persons might have suffered from pressure; but there was, by a fatal mistake in the builder, an unguarded and rather precipitous staircase of about sixteen steps to descend, and the loss of footing by one person produced a succession of falls from the pressure behind; and the crowd continued to spring upon and trample their fellow-creatures, lying suffocated below. Fifteen persons lost their lives on this melancholy evening. In the only case where animation suspended was at all restored, the recovery was baffled; the gentleman died. Eight of the sufferers were females of great respectability in life. It was rather remarkable, that, of the males trampled to death on this occasion, two were heralds—Benjamin Pingo, Esq. York Herald, and J. C. Brooke, Esq. Somerset Herald. There were about

twenty other sufferers, from bruises and fractures of the legs and arms; and some of these died.

Their Majesties were kept uninformed of the accident until the entertainments of the evening were concluded. But it made, I know, a deep impression upon their minds; and they commanded a very minute report to be made to them, as to the sufferers and the condition of their respective families. In the course of the evening, upon entering the box lobby, I found a dismay, a consternation so generally diffused in the house, that there must have been singular precaution, at many points, to prevent an appearance of some alarm about the royal boxes.

There were at Covent Garden Theatre some novelties, which met with various success. Mr. Holcroft had a comedy called Love's Frailties, which had one slight defect, namely, that it was written with the impassioned philosophy of the new school, and the hope of urging on the demolition of rank and title, then so happily consummated in France. The very prologue, of which part was the suggestion of Mr. Thelwall, evinced the tone and temper of the piece, in a couplet, by the author's own instruction, thus appropriated:

THELWALL.—"Or running footmen" (*happily completed by*)
HOLCROFT.———————"sent with hoop and hollo,
Types of the VAPID THINGS that are to follow."

In the play itself, the preference given "to the artist and the tradesman over that *less useful* and *less worthy* personage," who it should be remembered *employs* them, alarmed the GENTILITY of the audience, and such *frailties* in the author were pronounced incurable on this side the grave! Bate Dudley's opera, the *Travellers in Switzerland*, by the dexterity of the whole business, was as successful as any thing of that sort can be—good music and good scenery operating upon inoffensive matter, suggested by a mind of singular adroitness, and usually with great certainty attaining its object. The fable was a puzzled skein not worth unravelling, though part of it winds through an enchanted castle, in the fashion of that day. Dudley was somehow a sure card. Nor was the Haymarket without an amusing comedy at this season from the pen of the veteran Cumberland, called the Box-lobby Challenge. The title had no great propriety, if I remember; but it was fortunate one way, it secured a very sportive epilogue from the younger Colman, containing the preliminaries of a shop-boy duel. The Hon. Fr. North wrote a prologue, of which the point was to compare other people's plays to other people's children, always insufferable except

to the parents. He has seldom succeeded better than in the present sprightly versification. This comedy, though not written with the full power of Cumberland, had attraction of a cheerful cast, and was well received.

On the 12th of March the town was at once astonished and delighted by the opening of the new Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Its spaciousness was entirely sunk in its lightness and proportion. Had I the construction of twenty theatres, this should be their model. It seemed to grow out of the pointed architecture, from its effect; though its parts did not imitate that mysterious order, or perhaps disorder, of composition. Why, *since*, theatres have affected so solid an inside front, it were perhaps fruitless to inquire. As to their exterior, convenience is the only principle that is imperative in such piles; and that, consequently, has been put out of sight altogether. The carriages have hardly any space to move in, and the audience are exposed to the wet, as speedily as possible, on their leaving the lobbies. The exit doors are still too few.

The oratorios were naturally well attended; and the coup d'oeil of the orchestra, piled up in Capon's actual building of a Gothic chapel, magnificent and even sublime. The house was at once ascertained to be a fine musical structure; and when applied to its positive purposes, with a company upon its stage seldom equalled and never surpassed—with all the leading beauties of England at the head of the polite, the liberal, the intelligent public—again, I say our dear Kemble's heart might swell with pride at being manager of such a theatre.

I am brought back to the rival theatre, by being myself selected to supply part of the means by which Drury Lane was to be opposed. I have already ventured, some pages back, to interest the reader in the discussion, how the supernatural may best be exhibited upon the stage: and I, at the same time, showed that the author of Fontainville Forest meditated some improvements which were suggested to him by the sister art of painting. How far the stage execution might correspond with his notion was matter of experiment. A ludicrous misconception of his instructions might have ruined his whole design. Perhaps the reader may find some amusement in the *miseries* of an author. The great contrivance was, that the spectre should appear through a bluish-gray gauze, so as to remove the too corporeal effect of a 'live actor,' and convert the moving substance into a gliding essence.

As, to speak the absolute truth, any great effect in this

play depended on the management of the ghost scene.* Mr. Harris ordered a night rehearsal of it, that the author might judge how happily the stage had seconded his conceptions. Mrs. Pope had charmed us with the pathos of her recitation — the entrance of the spectre approached. On came good, honest, jolly Thompson, "in his habit as he lived," with the feathern pitch, "time out of mind the player's armour"—as thick nearly as he was long,—

> "And over all, that he might be
> Equipt from top to toe,
> His *grey gause* VEIL, as buckram stiff,
> Right manfully did throw."

No; never, except a river god in some procession, with all his *sedge* about him; never did I behold such a figure! I was rivetted to my seat with astonishment. Mr. Harris, who sat in the front by my side, said he thought the effect very good. But not staying to dispute this opinion, I made no secret of my distress and alarm; and clearly explained to him what my own idea really was. He laughed heartily at the mistake, and we soon found, across a portal of the scene, a proper place for the gauze worn by old Thompson. The clumsy effect of the traditional stage armour he did not so soon admit, and asked at last, rather briskly, how it could be made better; I told him that, in the first place, the present ghost must be *laid*, and a much higher spirit be invoked; and at length we found the tall, sweeping figure, that was to freeze the spectator with horror, in the person of Follet, the clown so royally celebrated for the eating of *carrots* in the pantomimes. Follet readily agreed to lend his person on this momentous occasion—his stride might have delighted Mr. Fuseli himself—his figure was of the heroic height—his action whatever you chose to order But notwithstanding all these requisites for the part, there occurred one formidable difficulty. The ghost had but two words to utter, "PERISH'D HERE;"—now "that will be exactly the case with the author," said Follet, "if *I* speak them." The fable had taught every body, that though the animal might be concealed, the *voice* would betray him. We therefore settled it, that, in imitation of the ancients, he should be only the MIME, to make the action on the stage, and that poor Thompson, disencumbered from the pitch of the Majesty of Denmark, should yet at the wing, with

* "Why should your terror lay my proudest boast?
Madam, I DIE, if I *give up* the GHOST."
Author's Epilogue.

hollow voice, pronounce the two important words; to which the extended arm of Follet might give the consentaneous action.

All that remained now was to dress the spirit; for which purpose I recommended a dark blue grey stuff, made in the shape of armour, and sitting close to the person; and when Follet (of course unknown) was thus drest, and faintly visible behind the gauze or crape spread before the scene, the whisper of the house, as he was about to enter,—the breathless silence, while he floated along like a shadow—proved to me, that I had achieved the great desideratum; and the often-renewed plaudits, when the curtain fell, told me that the audience had enjoyed

"That sacred terror, that severe delight,"

for which alone it is excusable to overpass the ordinary limits of nature.

For a whimsical dilemma that occurred, I may be excused in speaking of myself. I can only add that the public was extremely indulgent to my effort, and that I found the author's receipt very considerable indeed.

On the 21st of April, 1794, Drury Lane Theatre, erected as a proud monument to the fame of Shakspeare, was opened for the performance of plays. With the declared intention to devote the pile to his honour, it might have been advisable to delay two days for the object of commencing on the bard's birth-day. Saint Monday, however, carried it with the treasury, and Wednesday lost the honour and the coincidence. I never yet was able to get any extraordinary honours paid to this day, though the poet also died upon it; and yet, heaven knows! if the proprietors of theatres were to be estimated by what they write of Shakspeare at the bottom of their play-bills, not even Schlegel himself by "taffeta phrases" could more mystify his excellences.

Mr. Kemble opened with Macbeth, and with his sister in the Lady displayed the utmost perfection of the art. I have long since exhausted the subject; and, along with my ever-lamented friend Opie, preferred the *proper* presentment of Banquo's spirit to his banishment. I have proved the poet's own notions by his own directions, preserved in the folio 1623*. And as Macbeth never till then was submitted to the press, it avoided all the chances of corruption, from numerous impressions, edited carelessly, if edited at all. Nor could this particular play have suffered by *frequent* transcription in

* "Enter the Ghost of Banquo, and sits in Macbeth's place.

the playhouse itself: it was written subsequent to the accession of JAMES, and printed from the prompt-book of the very theatre for which it was written, and of which the author was a proprietor. It was therefore acted, at first and after, as Shakspeare himself *directed*. This one point well cleared and put at rest, the question that remains is, with regard to our modern notions, whether it is not more advisable that Macbeth should *fancy* the dreadful visitor, than that the assembled court of Scotland should be conceived incapable of seeing, what the audience, as well as Macbeth, perceive to be a ghastly body sitting in the royal chair?

The same critics who banish Banquo from the feast, applaud the banishment of the *dancing spirits* during the dream of Queen Katharine. Before confirming their decree, a judicious spectator would ask, what there was in the vision, that a man, with the knowledge of D'Egville, would not render a source of even sublime and beautiful embellishment? Look at the effect of these circling and ascending spirits in Mr. Fuseli's picture of that scene, (where he has used Rembrandt with great skill)—I say boldly that the stage is competent to all HIS effect, and *more*. In the mean time, the reader is referred to the description of the scene as originally written; and he may thence conceive a higher gratification than one of Handel's songs, sung by a Miss Anybody in a modern frock, trying to disturb, rather than assist, the last slumbers of the dying Queen.

To close with Macbeth. On this occasion Mr. Kemble allowed his brother Charles to appear in the character of *Malcolm;* and, with a love for him that has rarely been equalled, compelled him to acquire the art, by passing through its gradations. It is to the credit of that gentleman, that he submitted implicitly to his brother's judgment; who bespoke my attention to him early, by saying, "Boaden, you will see shortly two young men in the profession, in whom I take an interest; one of them is my brother, Charles: HE will make an actor." The other person alluded to, in his time, I have no doubt, *made* many an actor, for he possessed the theory of the art in great perfection; but in his own efforts he certainly confirmed the unfavourable judgment, which *privately* had been given against him.

It might perhaps have been expected that Sheridan would open his new theatre with verse of his OWN; but General Fitzpatrick, with some French leanings as to our irregularity in the drama, closed about fifty lines, spoken, I remember, by Kemble, with the prediction that Britons, through many a distant age, should hail the founder of our drama!

> "And from the cavils of pedantic spleen,
> Defend the glories of their Shakspeare's scene."

George Colman got up a pantomime epilogue most gaily for Miss Farren; who shows off the new theatre in the style of a noble lord's housekeeper. In obedience to her wand, the reservoir rushed forth to prove that the audience had *water* to dread rather than fire: and should even the *scenery* take fire, an *iron curtain* would instantly drop between the conflagration and the audience. All this nonsense had proceeded from engineers, who could find inventions, while managers could find money; and were caught at by the latter, to make a strong effect upon the public mind.

Except as to panic, fire can do nothing in theatres, where every eye is open and every hand ready to extinguish it. As Shakspeare himself expressed it,

> "Through NIGHT and NEGLIGENCE such fires are spied
> In populous cities."

And when they are, what security is found in reservoirs without water, and iron curtains that would soon be fire heat in a conflagration? The watchman, too, like other mortals, drowsy, if not absolutely sleeping, by degrees remitting his search upon having so constantly found all well, is at the critical moment terrified beyond his reason. All becomes alarm, noise, hurry, and the struggle to save individual property; and the "court and guard of safety" is speedily a mass of flaming ruin. However, for the present, founded, as they expressed themselves, upon a rock, guarded by science, and confident in their immense attraction of every kind, they must be allowed to feel their triumphant security, unchecked by our fatal knowledge of what fifteen short years were to bring to pass.

One of the first and best novelties produced in the new theatre, was the comedy of the Jew, written by Cumberland. That ancient people had been rather scurvily treated by either the political or literary world. Their wealth, a distinction which they owe to themselves, subjects them to hatred for its use, and to pillage on every indecent pretext. Even Shakspeare, who has made his Shylock triumphant in his logic, and affecting in his misery, seems to enjoy his defeat by a quibble, and his conversion by a halter. But this ill-used people, on the 8th of May, had the satisfaction to see their benevolent feelings admitted by a great nation, and Sheva pronounced at least as natural a character as Shylock. I hope

the gratitude of Duke's place now compensated the failure of the author to move the Lords of the treasury. Bannister merited a statue for the very able performance of Sheva; though, subsequently, Cumberland used to talk of Dowton's as the finest act in the world.

The epilogue, spoken by Miss Farren, set out with great pleasantry on the *origin* of woman, but dwindled away its point, and ended hardly intelligible. The *Jew* became popular all over these islands: and except the *Wheel of Fortune*, is clearly the best of Mr. Cumberland's latter pieces. I dined with him at Bannister's, and found him a little open to pleasantry: he sported paradox upon paradox—"Handel was no composer"—"It was quite impossible for any man to reason, without depth in * mathematical science," and so on; but his own attainments were to be measured one day by the contemptuous logical restriction of Bishop Watson.

"I had too great contempt for his powers of argumentation to answer any thing he published against me: he had merit as a versifier and a writer of essays; but his head was not made for close reasoning. 'There are,' says Locke, 'some men of one, some of two syllogisms, and no more, and others that can advance but one step further. These cannot always discern that side on which the strongest proofs lie.' Mr. Cumberland was, at most, a two syllogism man."—*The Bishop's Life*, vol. i. p. 124.

At the other house, a tragedy in three acts, called the Siege of Meaux, from the pen of the laureate Pye, was acted on the 19th of May, with applause. It must not be confounded with the celebrated and terrible siege of that place, in 1421, by our hero, the fifth Henry. It is narrow in its business, and of little interest, written with great purity, as was to be expected, being the work of so eminent a scholar. It is often extremely painful to be obliged to remind a man of genius and learning, that every profession must be learned; and the great effects of the drama can only proceed from intimate acquaintance with the stage. The drama, by its

* See, however, on this subject, the admirable discrimination of Warburton, at p. 19 of the Introduction to his Julian, 1751. "It may seem, perhaps, too much a paradox to say, that long habit in this science, *incapacitates* the mind for reasoning at large, and especially in the search of moral truth. And yet, I believe, nothing is more certain. The object of Geometry is demonstration, and its subject admits of it, and is almost the only one that doth. In this science, whatever is not demonstration is nothing, or at least below the sublime inquirer's regard. *Probability*, through, its almost infinite degrees, from simple ignorance up to absolute certainty, is the *terra incognita* of the Geometer. And yet here it is that the great business of the human mind is carried on, the search and discovery of all the important truths which concern us as reasonable beings."

occasional profits, tempts beyond the other walks of literature; a successful play producing, by less than 100 pages, a reward beyond quartos of historical research and painful elaboration. But Pye, though even the author of an epic poem, was not at all turned to tragedy.

Mr. Henry Siddons, the son of the great actress, had dramatised the Sicilian Romance of Mrs. Radcliffe, and he allowed Middleton to act it for his benefit on the 28th. He had learned, at all events, to "shape his ends" dramatically, and the work was creditable to his industry.

Mr. Kemble had been amusing himself by translating, from the French, a musical romance, called Lodoiska. There is a bustle about it that will always interest strongly: it seems to have been the model of all the fortresses subsequently stormed. Kera Khan and his Tartars—Princess Lodoiska, Count Floriski, with flaming walls and delightful music, mixed excellently well together, and brought a *mine* of wealth into the theatre. Charles Kemble took a young Tartar, called Kajah, under that greatest of Tartar chiefs, Barrymore; and worked every night like a Turk, to come at last into broad day light. As Drury Lane Theatre had commenced its operations late in the season, it did not close them until the 8th of July, having, however, on the 2d, acted the Country Girl, with Jordan, for the benefit of those who were left desolate and destitute by the glorious deaths on the 1st of June. Cobb, one of the ready writers of that day, put a little afterpiece together, in which every body acted, and with the immense resources of the new stage, a sea-fight was given, in which a seaman might find something to admire. To this piece, called *The Glorious First of June*, Richardson wrote a prologue of great beauty, which Mr. Kemble himself spoke. The points were frequent, and yet graceful.

> "No; every eye, in generous drops bedew'd,
> Shall own that bounty here is *gratitude*."

The appeal to the gallant spirits, who had sealed, with their blood, the safety of their country, was extremely eloquent—*v. g.*

> "If of your former being ought survive,
> And memory holds her *dear* prerogative."

But the strong point was in the surprise, when the great hero himself was named:

> "Glory itself at such a shrine may bow,
> And what is glory, but a name for HOWE?"

I only add the dexterous union of the victors and the public—

"They who have *won* the laurel—You who *give*."

Surely conviviality had few more accomplished victims than Joseph Richardson.

The summer theatre was now to do its best to compensate the want of Mr. Kemble in Octavian. The young manager had been indecently accused of predilection for his own pieces. I should call it rather attention to his own interest. His productions had a decided fashion about them, that did not attend those of his contemporaries; and I know that he never refused his stage to a novelty of decent promise. The Mountaineers was of necessity to be played, though the delightful Octavian could not sacrifice any more time to its performance in town. I saw Mr. Palmer in the character. Though not naturally a tragedian, he was an able actor—he had energy, he had pathos—he had a fine, yet rather full, figure; but his countenance, though handsome, was not marking: and his attitudes, though bold, were not picturesque. His appearance indicated nothing of solitude and distraction, and blighted hope. He was a living contradiction in terms, and his Octavian implied a miracle.

There was yet another important substitute this season, Fawcett for John Bannister, who went to Liverpool. Much of Bannister, Fawcett could not touch—age must be given to the character to force out the *pathetic* that was in him. His humour, too, did not seem to spring from *flight*:—absurdity looked *considerate* in Fawcett. But Colman soon found out his peculiar force, and wrote for him admirably. The attention of this worthy man, and able actor, was always unfailing to every duty of his profession.

In the midst of the son's triumphs as a writer, the elder Colman was drawing to the close of an existence suffering under mental alienation. After the termination of his season, in the year 1785, he had gone to Margate, and was there affected by palsy; but it was not until 1789, that any disorder of the intellect became apparent. He was reduced to a condition of nervous imbecility; and died at a house in Paddington, under proper care, on the 14th of August, aged 62.

Mr. Colman was born at Florence, where his father was resident for his Britannic majesty; and this procured the honour of a royal godfather, in the person of King George the Second. His mother was a sister of the Countess of Bath. He received his education at Westminster and at Christ Church, Oxford. He took his degree of master of arts on the 18th of March, 1758, and brought out his first farce in the

year 1760. School friendships are often decisive of future engagements. The associate of Lloyd, Churchill, and Bonnel Thornton, was infinitely more likely to become a *connoisseur* than a lawyer. The *Jealous Wife* proved him to possess the very highest power as a comic writer; his *Terence* established his fame as the neatest of all translators. By the deaths of Lord Bath and General Pulteney in 1764 and in 1767, he found himself in circumstances, vehemently to be desired by all followers of the muses. His taste led him to the theatre; and he purchased first into Covent Garden, and finally into the Haymarket. The numerous productions of his pen are before the public, and will long remain so: he collected even his fugitive pieces, and was sufficiently alive to his reputation as an author, to think of correctness even in trifles. As a critic, he had that integrity of judgment which leads to the exact truth; while spirits equally, perhaps more, subtle, fly often away after hypotheses, useless and untenable. His achievement as to the epistle of Horace AD PISONES has had the highest praise. His skill in the Latin language was particularly acknowledged by Dr. Johnson. He lived in the full affluence of fame, beloved by the greatest and the best of men, till a cloud gathering in the decline of his course, he was covered from our view, and shortly after sunk below the horizon.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Harris restores a one shilling gallery.—Holcroft's Prelude.—Mrs. Davenport.—Reynolds, The Rage.—Mr. Kemble acts Publius.—Baddeley's death.—Mrs. Robinson.—Her comedy of Nobody.—Author's acquaintance with that lady.—Variety of new pieces.—Mr. Kemble revives All's Well that Ends Well, and Measure for Measure.—Death of the admirable Parsons.—Mr. Kemble, with D'Egville for his ballet-master, gives the Splendid Progress of Alexander the Great.—Mr. Kemble's particular attention to the Wheel of Fortune.—Novosielski dies.—First Love.—Mr. Boaden's Secret Tribunal.—Want of helmets.—Zorinski.—Mrs. S. Kemble.—The Knights.—Miss Mansell.—Cumberland's hurry.—Reynolds's speculation succeeds.—Mr. Kemble acts Alexander.—Cooper fails in Macbeth.—Days of Yore.—Holcroft's Man in Ten Thousand.—Morton's Way to Get Married.—Novelties.—Iron Chest.

THE merits of our stage architecture are discernible at first sight; a *second* usually dispels the charm. Covent Garden had recently cost a large sum, to be rendered perfect. A shilling gallery had been left out of the original plan, but was placed at length so as to render the gods invisible to men below. Indeed, those far-seeing powers had no common obstruction to their own view. "Phidias," says the great lecturer, "had discovered in the nod of the Homeric Jupiter the characteristic of majesty, *inclination of the head:* this hinted to him a higher elevation of the neck behind, a bolder protrusion of the front, and the increased perpendicular of the profile" All these sublime arts had in vain been practised by our theatric gods: for any earthly enjoyment, they might as well have been in heaven, as where they were. Now, however, by cutting away a painted gallery, the shilling was permitted to see the stage; indeed, the whole ceiling was new. The frontispiece also a new one. The former column became a pilaster. The general character of the house was a fawn colour, with green and gold pannels. The cappings of the boxes were of green morocco leather; the seats stuffed of the same colour. The seats through the whole house were raised. Behind the curtains some red borders were so-

berly changed for green, and the machinist, an ancient as well as modern divinity,

"Namque erit ille mihi semper Deus,"

obtained more room for his operations. Conscious of all these improvements, Mr. Harris got Holcroft to scribble a prelude for him, called the Rival Queens; in which, perhaps without design, the superior title was attached to the other house—Queen Covent Garden, *Empress* Drury. The head tire was equally unfortunate, for the former bore the *Piazza* upon her crown, and the latter wore the cupola surmounted by *Apollo*. If Kemble had desired a symbol of difference between them, is not this precisely what he would have chosen?

On the 24th of September that excellent actress, Mrs. Davenport, made her first curtsey at Covent Garden; and from that time to the present has remained one of the most diligent and diverting performers that ever amused the public. Mrs. Green was rather cooler; but Davenport *flaming* in the front of Lewis, Quick, Munden, and Fawcett, was a meteor of infinite value. The comic *harmony* of all their tones was really past belief. Miss Wallis, in October, returned to this theatre in Imogen, considerably advanced in talent, but retaining all her native retiring modesty.

Reynolds's comedy, *semper eadem*, as Mr. Harris used to tell him, was as like in its success as in its structure or characters. *The Rage* fortunately was supposed to be personal.—Old P.'s were taken for old Q.'s—a boxing Peer was properly named Savage: and the husband of a celebrated singer was as decidedly exhibited under the name of Cygnet, as Flush might stand for any one of the tribe of money-lenders. Seduction, disguise, disinheritance, adoption, are the nerves which support him through his five acts; whimsical incidents, practical jokes, and very sparkling dialogue, render his plot of no great consequence —amusement constantly attends him, and every body who wishes to be amused. It is almost a fortune to give, to such an actor as Lewis, the name of Gingham. But Reynolds passed his whole time in *thinking* comedies; and only lived by writing them. He was so popular, that he had all the gay world running after him; and the grave preferred their exhilaration to their criticism.

Mr. Kemble's decided preeminence in the *Roman* character, makes it necessary to record his performance of Publius, in the play of the Roman Father, on the 15th of November,—Mrs. Siddons was the Horatia. As this people aimed to be superior to the sympathies of nature, they excite little natural sympathy.

In France at this time every thing was Roman, even to the style of a wig. Delation arrived at a climax among the mimics, from which I believe the savage originals themselves shrunk—and children denounced the aristocracy or federalism of their parents, and were applauded for their VIRTUE!

The stage suffered a considerable loss on the 20th of this month by the death of poor Baddeley. On the evening before he was seized with a fit, while dressing for Moses in the School for Scandal. He was taken home to his house in Store Street, and effort made to preserve him, but he lived only to the next day. His Swiss and his Jews, his Germans and his Frenchmen, were admirably characteristic—they were finely generalized by Baddeley, and played from actual knowledge of the people, not from a casual snatch at individual peculiarities. Baddeley left money for a dramatic mass to be said for him for ever, in the green-room of Drury Lane Theatre. Baddeley's *cake* and Dogget's coat and badge, consitute a fame, from which the merits of the actor are said to shrink. The gift of Baddeley keeps his name with good taste in the mouths of the profession of which he was an ornament; and there certainly would be more of such memorials, but that the successful are willing to forget their humbler rank, and those who fail, in their decline have nothing to bequeath.

No season presented more indifferent pieces than the present —they departed usually like the shadows they were. Among the sons and daughters of disappointment was that very amiable unfortunate Mrs. Robinson. A perfect martyr to the rheumatism; the use of the lower limbs quite gone; carried from room to room, or from her house to her carriage like an infant; she yet had the nerve to control her bodily sufferings, so as to indulge a constant use of the pen, except at the periods of refection and exercise. Among the numerous trifles that soothed her lonely hours, was a comedy in two acts, entitled *Nobody*. I remember the warmth with which she chaunted the kindness of Mrs. Jordan in accepting the principal character; and I cannot forget the way, when the storm began, in which the actress, frightened out of her senses, "died and made no sign." Mrs. Robinson at the time lived in St. James's place, and very unaffectedly entertained the few literary friends she had. She was delighted in the opportunity it gave her of hearing all that passed in the world, and of mingling in the conversation her full share of intelligence and grace—she still *sat* a remarkably interesting woman, and disdained to intrude upon conversation any evidence of pain actually suffered at the moment. So that at the jest of others, and sometimes during her own repartee, the countenance preserved its pleasant expression, while a cold

dew was glistening upon the forehead. Sheridan very often looked in for an hour in the evening, and on this occasion had to endure the eloquent indignation of his fair friend. She certainly considered herself ill used, and MEEKY, as he used ironically to call her, made her attacks rather powerfully. But I have before described the manner of Sheridan. It forms no part of my design to indulge the appetite of scandal, and most assuredly this lovely woman had severely expiated the errors of her early life. The respect of the liberal part of society she always retained during the period when I had the happiness to know her. Her father, Captain Darby, had been intimate with mine, and I had heard of the childish graces of MARY from a most benevolent man, no bad judge of merit, whom they had entirely captivated. She spoke remarkably well, and with a depth of tone somewhat remarkable. She was conversant with the French, Italian, and German literature, and had a facility of composition almost approaching to that of Mrs. Cowley.

I am led by the date, as well as the allusion just made, to notice next, a comedy produced on the 6th of December, called *The Town before You.* What it wanted was some one leading interest. It had not been well considered; the subject had been rather created by labour, than suggested by fancy; and the play was withdrawn to be altered, a fruitless process. Cobb's Cherokee, at the other theatre, never returned into the treasury the expense of getting it up. In its cast it had prodigious strength, but it was inferior in power or good fortune to his other operas. Andrews, perhaps assisted, brought out at Covent Garden what was called, erroneously, a dramatic tale of the Mysteries of the Castle. But *Mysteries* were very far indeed from the touch of the writers; and taking the name of Montoni from Udolpho, and the name only, they fabricated a non-descript of every sort of absurdity; and having long debauched the public taste, succeeded perhaps beyond expectation,—certainly beyond desert.

Mr. Kemble had revived two of Shakspeare's comedies this season, with his usual care—*All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Measure for Measure.* In the former he condescended to Bertram; in the latter he acted the Duke with a dignity, a venerable propriety, and picturesque effect never surpassed. The Isabel of Mrs. Siddons was a model of cloistered purity, and energy, and grace. I clearly never have seen a more perfect delineation. When she afterwards read the play in public, she projected this character rather beyond the rest, perhaps more from the habit of acting it herself, than any designed departure from the equality imposed by reading.

Among the greatest losses, which the stage of my time has sustained, is most unquestionably to be classed that of William

Parsons, on the 3d of February, 1795. He had all his life suffered from asthma, and it terminated his existence in his 59th year. Parsons was born on the 29th of February, 1736. His father was a builder, who lived in Bow Lane, and his son in consequence profited by the education of St. Paul's school, at once the nearest and the best. His father, properly looking upward for his son, designed him to be an architect, and therefore, after grounding him well as a classic scholar, placed him as a pupil to Sir Henry Cheere. Here he cultivated the fine arts assiduously: he mixed landscape with architectural designs, and painted flowers with great success. For his amusement he painted occasionally through life; and he illustrated from his early profession when speaking of the stage. He would say of any crude unstudied performance, "Sign-post daubing!" Parsons first acted Kent, in King Lear, and felt his way for some years in the profession, till, being invited from Edinburgh by Garrick, that great master led him ultimately to what he was fitted for by nature; and some hardnesses being rubbed down, a strong tendency to grimace confined to occasional sallies, and above all things, at last measuring and waiting the proper moment of effect, and being rich enough in expression to keep the spectator in waiting, and happy to wait, he threw in his heightening touches into the living composition before you, so judiciously and irresistibly, that he became the master of his audience, and his rivals alike. But I have long since endeavoured to paint this great and unrivalled actor, to whom we are indebted for many delightful hours of relaxation in our passage through life. His last performance was Sir Fretful Plagiary, in the Critic, on the 19th of January, 1795. From his arrival at Drury Lane Theatre, in 1762, to his death, he had never quitted it, nor would he be tempted by the strongest offers that could be made, when his earliest friend, and almost brother, Powell, went to the other theatre. This principle, so honourable in itself, so advantageous to the community, so conducive to the perfection of the art, must be again *revived*, or the stage will lose its legitimate fame of good acting, and exist only by a series of contemptible tricks. This subject is not below legislative interference.

> "A nation's TASTE depends on you;
> Perhaps a nation's MORALS too."

On the 6th of February, a grand-daughter of the illustrious Dr. Arne came out in Gay's Polly. She had sweetness and taste, an interesting figure and countenance, and indeed every requisite but force. In a room, I heard that she was delightful.

D'EGVILLE, whom I have always thought the greatest artist of ballet in England, being allowed full latitude at the new

theatre, produced his most triumphant work, the *Progress of Alexander the Great*, a spectacle worthy of Greece in all its glory. Mr. Kemble had now realized his plan of acting the sterling old plays with a perfection never before attempted; and of directing the appetite for noise and show to objects, in which the refined taste found even superior gratification to that enjoyed by the crowd, for whose amusement they had principally been designed. I was now very frequently with him, and know the great pains he took with the character of *Penruddock*, in the Wheel of Fortune. It came at length upon the stage, on the 28th of February, one of the most perfect impersonations that had ever excited human sympathy. He had fashioned every sentence of the part to his own organs, so that it seemed a decided reality; and his personal manner was so little disturbed, that the spectator, by an easy delusion, almost fancied that Mr. Kemble was relating some striking misfortunes that had happened, in early life, to himself. I most seriously affirm, that, for *identity*, Penruddock would hardly admit of competition. Here, from the great intimacy between us, he advised with me as to the plain and almost quaker attire he wore; and I saw in his walk, and occasionally in his countenance, the image of that noble wreck of *treachery* and *love*, which was shortly to command the tears of a whole people. He had a habit, by intense meditation, of working himself into a character which he considered important, and calculated to diversify the usual range of his performances. Penruddock merited his pains.

As the architect and scene-painter of the Opera-house, in which Mr. Kemble had acted, he regretted the death of that gentlemanly man, Mr. Novosielski. He was born at Rome in the year 1750; and, when Wyatt was engaged upon the Pantheon, and required the assistance of a young man of genius, Dr. Freÿ named Novosielski to go over from Rome to England for that purpose, which was completely answered in his diligence and skill. Novosielski, though at that time under twenty, was almost a victim to the severity of his application. He died on the 8th of April, at the age of 45, in the Isle of Thanet; and I believe his children are yet living among us, highly respected for merits congenial with those of their parent. A few days only are past since a pupil of his mentioned him to me with great feeling.

Cumberland with, if not his utmost power, yet with great care and feeling, had constructed a comedy on the sentimental subject of First Love, and Mr. Kemble brought it out on the 12th of May. It had the good fortune to combine the talents of Miss Farren and Mrs. Jordan. The interest is of this kind:—Lord Sensitive having gone through the ceremony of marriage with Sabina Rolet, an emigrant at Padua, yet abandons her

and addresses Lady Ruby. In the mean time, Frederick Mowbray, who had originally been attached to her Ladyship, has become so interested by Sabina, as to offer her his hand. Lady Ruby, in the graces of Miss Farren, assails the reason and the conscience of Lord Sensitive so forcibly, that he resolves to acknowledge Sabina, and seek her in Italy without delay. The journey is, however, rendered unnecessary by that lovely and persecuted creature's being in the very house of Lady Ruby; Frederick recurs joyfully to his passion for Lady Ruby, and *first loves* are rendered triumphant through the whole drama.

The reader sees, that all this is elegant and well mannered, and judiciously entangled. He need not question the melancholy music of Mrs. Jordan's voice, and he may always rely upon the accomplished energy of Miss Farren. Palmer acted ably and carefully, as he had a real pleasure in scenes that combined him with Miss Farren; but Wroughton, in such characters as Lord Sensitive, had a merit quite peculiar to himself; and without elegance of person, and with a small style of features of no very refined expression, seemed so absolutely in earnest, that he banished all notion that he was acting; and to the extent of his powers, has never, I think, been equalled. It may look like minute criticism; but it is of importance as a lesson in the art, to say, that Wroughton's unsophisticated manners left his deportment entirely at its ease; and he was the only stage gentleman whom his *arms* did not embarrass—he wore them always where they should be.

On the 3d of June, a second tragedy from the pen of Mr. Boaden was acted, with applause at the Covent Garden Theatre. It was called the *Secret Tribunal*, and founded upon the romance, by professor Kramer, called Herman of Unna. A critic of that time was pleased to write of it, that "the successive scenes were awful and impressive;" that "the characters were drawn with a bold and spirited hand, and the general effect such as the author certainly intended." I can hardly be expected to dispute so favourable a sentence; and yet if the writer of it be living, which I cannot know, I shall amuse him by saying, that I now think I ought to have done more with the subject; chiefly in the way of *preparing* a strange and unheard of institution. The author of the romance had three volumes to work out his interest, and unfold his terrors. I had occupied but 70 pages in conducting my play to its catastrophe. Shakspeare nowhere is more truly an artist, than when he throws in a scene of simple interlocution between two nameless lords, or gentlemen, or peasants, by which his leading characters are saved unnatural explanations, and his audience are fully aware of the scope of the serious business to come. But I had the fine notion of a regu-

lar play before me; and, I see, left every thing rather touched than explored; and even the *passion* of the scene too sudden and evanescent, to cling about the heart and intimately control the feelings. My charming friend, Miss Wallis, gave to my heroine, Ida, every captivation of form, and delicacy, and fervour. But the resources of the stage were reserved for melodramatic objects; and though the terror of the scene depended completely upon the judges being unknown, and therefore sitting with their helmets closed, I could by no means relieve the tribunal from the hereditary gowns and wigs, which "*disfigured*" rather than "presented" what was designed to be awful. I wanted the worthy knight of La Mancha to furnish my secret judges with his *pasteboard* supplements to the simple casque or morion. As no such Quixote could be found in the MANAGEMENT, my tribunal sat, muffled up in their cloaks, as if they had been dressed by the undertaker rather than the armourer of Wirtemberg. My play was exceedingly well acted, and Lord Loughborough had the condescension to let me know, through Miss Wallis, that he had been interested by my management of the subject.

On the 9th of June, the little theatre in the Hay-market opened with a prelude called *New Hay at the Old Market*. Colman knew that the public is never *obliged* by its own accommodation; and that they were quite ready to indulge in a laugh against the undertakers of new theatres and the authors of successful plays; so he let his fancy loose upon the great houses, and Mr. Cumberland, who had recently, at all events, done much for one of them. Sheridan was a little hurt by this warfare; and used to talk of the stable-yard he had in the Hay-market;—that he would build a summer theatre opposite to the little man, bring his Drury Lane company to act against him, and *shut him up*. The HAY-MAKER knew too well the *diligence* of his great opponent, to be much in fear of him; and as to Cumberland, his *sincere* admiration of any writings but his own was a point equally well known—so he continued in his course.

Morton had now acquired confidence enough to own *Zorinski* as his production at once; and on the 20th of June it was received with great applause. Barrymore, by a constant attention to Kemble, was become a steady tragedian; rather vehement than energetic; but by no means ungraceful, and fully to be relied upon. To him the real hero of the piece was entrusted; for as to Cassimir, the king of Poland, though the interest centres in him, he is but at one time the prey of conspiracy, and at another its bane, and villany drops its dagger at the feet of the milder virtues. The play was diversified by scenes of comedy and music, and composed in three acts, upon the

declared summer model. Morton did not write his serious opinions in blank verse; and when Sheridan came afterwards to dress up Pizarro from the German, he also kept to a poetical prose, which allowed of greater freedom, and consequently more variety in the expression. To possess the full power of blank verse, a long habit is essential, without which it is never sufficiently broken to be natural; and is, in fact, a series of lines elegantly modulated to one tune; from which rhyme seems to be unaccountably withdrawn.

The little theatre had suffered greatly by deaths and desertions, this the first season on the manager's own account; and he was reminded, very illiberally, that his father in *his* first season had the following names in his company:—Foote, Henderson, Parsons, Edwin, Palmer, John and Robert Baddeley, Bannister, Digges, Aickin; Miss Barsanti, Miss Farren, Mrs. Hunter, &c. &c. The "sweet remembrancer" would have eternally obliged the younger Colman, if he had added the information where such a company was now to be collected. Bannister, emboldened by his Sheva, on the 3d of August ventured upon the Jew that "Shakspeare drew,"—he left the fame of Shylock, where it will ever rest, upon the memories of Macklin and Henderson. Mrs. Stephen Kemble had really done every thing of consequence this season, and Mr. Kemble, and Mrs. Siddons kindly acted Douglas and Lady Randolph, for her benefit. It was not till the close of the season, the 2d of September, that *The Three and the Deuce*, by Prince Hoare, could be got ready for Bannister's exhibition of the three Singles. It will always be the vehicle of the theatrical Atalls; who, like Bottom, are for acting Pyramus, and Thisbe, and the Lion also.

The winter season of 1795–6 commenced at Covent Garden, by additions to the company. The *Knights* succeeded to Edwin, and Mrs. Wells in *Jacob* and our *Bridget*, in the Chapter of Accidents. Mr. Knight also acted Skirmish in the Deserter; he was a just, critical actor, and literally analysed a part in the most scientific margins that a play-book ever displayed. His wife was the sister of Miss Farren, and had a *strong* resemblance of the beautiful countenance of that delightful actress. She, however, remained at an immence distance from her powers in the art.

Cramer's sister-in-law, Mrs. Serres, made a rather successful appearance in Rosetta; her science was indisputable, but she huddled her dialogue together with the usual impatience of singers, who seem to disdain all effect that is not musical.

On the 8th of October, a young lady, named Mansell, of a respectable family in Wales, made her debût in Sophia, in the Road to Ruin. It might, in most cases, seem a hazardous, and

in many a hopeless undertaking, to come to a town like this, unaided and alone, and secure not only an engagement, but inviolable respect, by no overpowering talent, but by the mere unpretending possession of good sense, cultivated manners, and a pleasing person. This was, notwithstanding, achieved by the present Mrs. Reynolds. On this occasion, I avow the most decided partiality. The experience of her virtues, for a long series of years, renders me happy in devoting a few lines to the praise of one of the best and most amiable of women.

Cooper, an actor, I believe, instructed by Holcroft, appeared on the 19th of October, at Covent Garden Theatre, in the character of Hamlet; but, to repeat a former expression, he left the part with Henderson or Kemble; for any thing rational, *in my time*, never dreamed of a third.

Mr. Cumberland had done recently so much, that I suppose five weeks were as long a period as he allowed to the composition of a comedy. On the 20th of this month he occupied Drury Lane stage with a thing called The Dependent. It was not suffered to linger in its uneasy station, but was brushed away on the first night.

Reynolds was certainly never guilty of this hurry in composition; he usually occupied six months upon a comedy; and on the 7th of November brought out his *Speculation*, which amply succeeded. Here we had the King's Bench, and some of its customary tenants, men of *project*, without principle. Tanjore, in the hands of Lewis, was rendered extremely fertile of amusement—he dissipates a fortune, which is easily done, by gambling in the west; and what is not quite so easy, or at all events so usual, goes to the east without bettering his condition. He escapes from a gaol in India; and on his return to England, being out of suits with fortune, is arrested at the suit of a tailor. But rich relations being always within the *fancy* of an author, Tanjore, by a fortunate arrival, is rendered happy in all his objects. Miss Mansell acted in this comedy with great zeal.

The extraordinary preparations that were made by Mr. Kemble for D'Egville's grand ballet of Alexander the Great, like a skilful general, he converted to some of the purposes of playing; and accordingly, on the 23d of November, he revived Lee's Rival Queens, and himself performed the Macedonian Hero. It is recorded of Betterton, that in his old age, struggling with the gout, and with a figure rather encumbered and never approaching to the heroic, he yet by the fire of his imagination, and the music of his declamation, so fascinated his audience, as to render the rival of Achilles peculiarly his own. When it is remembered that he played the character in the cast court dress and voluminous wig of some noble, and that he

must have looked in his habit like King Arthur in Tom Thumb. some astonishment is excited, that our ancestors could endure a costume so absurd and so utterly false.

Mr. Kemble was a genuine Greek in his appearance, and in the prime of life, with infinite ardour and activity, afforded, perhaps, as much truth in the part of Alexander, as the stage can ever know. You might easily credit the hero's devotion to Homer when you saw Kemble. The Iliad seemed to be the source from which his mind was nourished; and the passage of the Granicus, as described by Lee, hardly exceeded the terror he inspired. They who love battles upon the stage saw now the perfection of such things.

At Covent Garden, on the last day of the month, Mr. Cooper attempted Macbeth; but he was obviously then defective in the very nerves of tragedy. He had no dawn of the poetical feeling, and did not quite drop to what is called the *natural* of acting. I heard, with pleasure, that in America he became, by great application, a judicious and valuable tragedian.

On the 13th of January, 1796, Mr. Cumberland was again upon the boards, with a serious piece called *Days of Yore*. The interest is in the pretended idiotcy of Voltimur, the son of Hastings. This character is exhibited with great success—disdaining all treachery, he delivers his great enemy, Alfred, without knowing him, declaring, at the same time, that, were it Alfred himself, his conduct would be the same. The great king rewards him by obtaining for his saviour the hand of Adela, though it had been pledged, by her father, to another. Pope, in Voltimur, acted with great energy and feeling, and increased his claim to the honours of tragedy. Mrs. Pope still retained the youthful heroines of those who looked beyond the surface. Cumberland had long written for her.

Mr. Kemble certainly did not spare himself, as an actor, for the toils of management. He accepted the principal character in a comedy called *A Man of Ten Thousand*, which was produced on the 23d of January, written by the other Mr. Endless—Holcroft. He had here got a useful fable to embody, and meditated a striking lesson in the *Timon* of comedy. Dorrington has a profuse turn of mind, keeps a splendid house and table, and entertains all those who will gratify vanity by indulgence at its cost. But the arrival of a man of the name of Hudson, from the West Indies, with a story of a tornado, which has demolished the plantations of Dorrington, leaves him speedily to solitude, and the ingratitude of his former guests. However, the poet of the day disposes of fortune literally upon her *wheel*, (that of the lottery,) and bestows a 20,000*l.* prize upon Hairbrain, who bought the ticket itself out of the bounty of Dorring-

ton. Harbrain, or, as I should write it, Harebrain, has the heart of generosity to compensate for his levity; and therefore flies to the relief of his patron; but fortune had settled the prize *unshared*, and Dorrington learns, that Hudson's news was entirely unfounded. The joy of this event took from the poet all power of arranging the yet unavoidable nuptials of Dorrington and Olivia. The piece did not take greatly.

On the same evening at the other house, Morton produced the first of that series of pleasant comedies, by which the author and the theatre so considerably benefited. The expense of their production was trifling; a scene or two to be painted or altered, and a few smart coats and waistcoats. My readers all know, that I allude to that most agreeable mixture of the serious with the comic, called *The Way to get Married;* the plot of this play is rather loose, and the author has disclaimed all unity of design. His interest lies in a variety of distinct circumstances, combined sometimes rather forcibly, but always of consequence enough to move with pity or laughter, as his contrast requires. He gives himself a projector to cool down; selfishness to chastise; laxity of principle to be reclaimed by generosity; and filial piety to reproach, by unmerited consolation, the conscience of an erring parent. All this is achieved with great dexterity, in language usually energetic, or pointed, or gay, perhaps rather suited to the stage than the closet, as a play made to be acted rather than read. Its success was unbounded, and no theatre in these kingdoms was long without *The Way to get Married*. It is no very great improbability, that at one hour, in some one evening of the week, the whole play-going part of the community of Great Britain, through all her cities, were applauding the work of Morton.

On the 2d of February, the good fortune of the Covent Garden manager sent him a farce, called *Lock and Key*, written by that genius of *entertainments*, Prince Hoare. The effect of Munden in Old Brummagen, and of Fawcett's story in Ralph, kept the house in a state of unceasing laughter; and here again the manager was not obliged to *buy* his audience.

The Plain Dealer of Wycherley was revived by Mr. Kemble on the 27th of this month. His Manly yields in comedy only to his Penruddock. It is singular that our critics upon this play should turn only to the Misanthrope of Moliere for points of imitation; and not perceive the use that a man of the town, like Wycherly, has made of Shakspeare himself. Manly, Fidelia, and Olivia, are in the exact relative situations of Orsino, Viola, and Olivia, in Twelfth Night: the only difference in the treatment results from the *manners* of the authors or the times. Wycherley turns the purity of his model into profligacy; but

both the Olivias are equally captivated by the female nuncio in male attire; and the Fidelia and Viola are equally in love with the Manly and Orsino of the two comedies.

The Plain Dealer was beautifully acted upon the whole; though Bannister felt what it was to succeed Yates in Jerry Blackacre. Mr. Kemble, on the present occasion, was quite enchanted with the melody of Mrs. Jordan's speaking voice in Fidelia; and expressed himself whimsically, I remember, in the language of Sterne's Sentimental Journey. The reader may indulge his fancy in appropriating the passage.

Mrs. Goodall played the disgusting profligate Olivia, and her maid Lettice was given to Miss Mellon. Mrs. Hopkins had all the Blackacres in fee simple.

The power displayed by Colman in the Mountaineers had led the patentee of Drury Lane Theatre into a negotiation for a play with music, with a character written expressly up to the talents of Mr. Kemble; and it was stipulated that the author was to receive a thousand pounds for an attraction of such importance. In his summer prelude he had treated the great theatre with contempt—but nothing could be more obvious than the fact, that, as a manager of a theatre, one line of policy may be necessary; and that the mere author is a "chartered libertine," who may carry his commodity even to his managerical enemies. Colman had been struck with the strength of the incidents in Godwin's Caleb Williams, and was then quite indifferent to its political tendency. Innocence, persecuted by power, and chivalrous honour conducting to the most atrocious baseness, were incidents of sufficient interest to furnish a play; and if poor Larpent did not, or could not, see the libellous mischief of the whole business—how it endangered all that ennobled our nature, and sullied the purity even of our tribunals,—why then he was as a lincenser more than "sand blind, high gravel blind," and the state must run the peril, which its dramatic guardian of the night did not apprehend. I never knew how the author of the romance vindicated to his own candor the choice of the name of FALKLAND for so accomplished a villian as his victim of a high sense of honour.* The pure and unsullied adherent to Charles the First merited at least an abstinence from *his* name on this occasion, even as a man of principle, acting, as the au-

* On this occasion my heart and head equally recognises the propriety of quoting perhaps the sublimest passage in the works of Bishop Hurd, an allusion of the great Platonist, More, to Falkland, Hyde, and Chillingworth. "Oh! profane not the glories of immortal, though successless virtue, with such reproaches. Those adored names shall preach honour to future ages and enthrone the majesty of virtue in the hearts of men, when wit, and parts, and eloquence, and poetry, have not a leaf of all their withered bays to recommend them." DIALOGUES, p. 36. ed. 1759.

thor might think, in error. But I take the liberty so say, on behalf of this high sense of honour, that it could not have been so wounded at all by the infliction of *brutal* violence. The first question that an honourable, highly-cultivated spirit would have asked was, whether the offender stood within the lists of gentlemanly appeal? If he did NOT, he would leave the laws to avenge their violated peace. The strength of ONE brute would have moved our genuine Falkland, no more than the KICK of another; and assassination plunged him below his rival; inasmuch as it was more ferocious violence equally remote from chivalrous principle, and a more outrageous violation of the laws. Thus all his crimes and his sufferings are made to reflect upon a principle, from which they never could spring, and the GENTLEMANLY FEELING is assailed, in consequence of actions which a gentleman would never commit.

Colman found in Gilpin's Forest Scenery some poachers, and other persons of a picturesque cast that enabled him to compose a picture as though some anachronism had combined Salvator Rosa with Spagnoletti. Storace, poor fellow, sang the last melancholy breathings of his spirit upon the present occasion, to complete the gloomy work, from which so much was expected.

On the 12th of March it was produced, and found to be heavy, and insufferably long. Every disaster had attended its progress. Its author was too ill to attend its rehearsals; and no body would *venture*, for him, to cut away those excrescences, which that very useful critic, a stop-watch, must necessarily have pointed out. In addition to all this, his great actor was himself as ill as the part he played is stated to be; and we all know, that spirits *worn down by indisposition* are, and must be, unequal to the display of the fierce struggle of the mind forcing an emaciated body into action. It is a call upon the actor for all the energy he *can* have to be at his command, checked and kept down occasionally by exhaustion and remitting vehemence. I have said this, because it was absurdly enough stated, that Mr. Kemble's own illness assisted him in the just exhibition of Sir Edward Mortimer. As for many reasons, I paid the greatest attention to this performance, I must be allowed to say that, skilful as Mr. Kemble was in *lulling* and *stifling* his cough, he was THAT night too ill, to do more than walk through any thing. He ought by no means to have brought out the play, whatever the treasury required. When a crowded audience in full expectation, is teased rather than delighted, it fastens upon a harmless levity, as often as a tiresome solemnity, in the declaration of its displeasure. Old Adam Winterton, a sort of superannuated *Vellum*, in the Drummer, felt their displeasure on more than one occasion; and though the part was beautifully acted by

Dodd, it put the whole play in peril, to produce him on the stage. There was a great deal of very perfect acting in the piece—Wroughton's plain country-gentleman, Fitzharding, was admirable. Bannister's Wilford was full of nature, and at times terrific. Miss Decamp stamped upon Judith an impress, that has lasted in stage prescription, as the only, because true, mode of exhibiting a variety of Amazons, quite unconscious of such an origin. Of the music, the opening *glee* will not easily be paralleled; and the *dialogue* and *chorus* have great merit; but the *finale* seemed built upon the idea of surrounding seraphs whispering peace to a departing spirit.

The author was severely annoyed by the treatment of his play, and wrote a very angry preface, which the *good-humoured* world valued at a GUINEA! and though it has been long omitted, I should yet be afraid, in a sale-room, to mark the comparative prices of the Iron Chest *with* the bloody knife of the author's vengeance, and of one *without* it. Among the very usual things in this play is a passage describing some of the antiquarian pursuits, which were attributed commonly to the great actor: the anticipated application of them, I fancy, *diverted* the author too much to allow him to question their delicacy or wisdom.

> "Edward is all deap reading, and black letter;
> He shows it in his very chin. He speaks
> Mere dictionary; and he pores on pages
> That give plain men the head-ache. 'Scarce and curious'
> Are baits his learning nibbles at. His brain
> Is cram'd with mouldy volumes, cramp and useless,
> Like a librarian's lumber-room."

The object of all this is not in the *play*. Mortimer is no such person. The "black-letter" was in daily use in his time and long after. The "scarce and curious," too, of the library wanted TIME, to become "baits for learning to nibble at." It is obvious *modern* satire, and, were it stands, is an anachronism. I heard this, at the time, from one person interested in the play; but it was certainly not Mr. Kemble; who I verily believe, would have spoken the lines, had he found them in his part, so perfectly insensible was he to what the multitude might think of him or his pursuits. With a very sincere regard for both these gentlemen, I yet determined, that it would be unmanly to avoid the subject altogether. Mr. Kemble never replied to the preface *himself*; there were, perhrps, too many, eager to thurst themselves into the order, which the French, with characteristic equivocation, call *avocats officieux*.

Mr. Colman brought out his play at the little theatre, and certainly established there, that the *most* vigorous health was

required to sustain the almoat infernal agonies of the hero. Never did any actor in my time make such dreadful exertions as were made by Elliston, then in the vigour of his youth, and in the command of a voice unequalled, perhaps in power. I remember well the effects he produced; he will forgive me, but the *melancholy shade of original greatness* was not there; the *fiendlike composure of calculated falsehood*, and the internal struggles of *not quite annihilated principle*, were not to be seen, as a palsy upon the countenance, that should have awed by purity and beauty. No; these were only to be found in the art, or wonderful expression of Kemble. So identified, I may say, was he with Sir Edward Mortimer, that, if his voice had utterly failed him, and he had been merely able to *act* and *look* the part, he would have conveyed a more graphic exhibition of it, than all the actors from 1796 to the present hour have been able to supply. But it was quite impossible for the play to recover itself at Drury Lane Theatre. Some years elapsed, I believe, without the least approach of the parties to reconciliation; and Mr. Kemble himself told me, that such a thing was impossible, and I must leave it where it stood: however, to Lord Mulgrave and to Frank North, he at last yielded up the point; the parties met, "wine exerted its natural power upon dramatic as well as other kings;" and he, I am quite sure, excused what was *too gross* in the attack, and at all events *unjust* to his talents, by considering the usual irritability of authors, and the absolute injury of his own unlucky indisposition. Mr. Kemble knew, too, that he had really taken very great pains in the preparations for this play, and studiously decorated it with all the *truth* of scenery that the studies of Capon could supply. It would be folly to ascribe those aids to any other taste or zeal than those of Mr. Kemble. The artist invariably worked by his instruction. For Vortigern, let me say, he only *altered* two scenes. For the Iron Chest, he executed *an ancient baronial hall*, the architecture of the times of Edward IV. and Henry VI. The *library* of Sir Edward Mortimer, from the most perfect specimens of the Gothic in existence. The vaulting of the groined ceiling, taken from a part of the beautiful clositer of the monks of St. Stephen, Westminster; the very book-cases had similar antiquity and beauty.

CHAP. IX.

Mr. Kemble in Vortigern.—Shakspeare papers.—Some naturally expected.—At length stated to be discovered.—Terms as to Vortigern.—Mr. Kemble's opinion.—Sheridan's.—Ireland's hand-bill.—Vortigern, how cast.—Speech in it.—Consequences.—Candid remark as to the author.—Lord Southampton's Autograph.

While Mr. Kemble thus suffered in the opinion of an *able* man from his indisposition, during the first night's performance of the Iron Chest, he was shortly after to bear from an *impudent* one, the imputation of having played the critic, when he should have acted Vortigern, and by downright treachery producing the damnation of Shakspeare himself. For many reasons the reader will require an account of this affair from ME; and the transaction is of too much moment to be slightly handled in any work that embraces the business of the stage. I shall, therefore, preserve all that is material in an attempt to palm a series of forgeries for the genuine writings of Shakspeare; and show how much probability aided the contrivers of the papers in the sacrilegious imposition, which would have placed the tragedy of Vortigern among the works of our greatest poet.

It was a subject of infinite surprise to the admirers of Shakspeare's genus, to observe from age to age, that while discoveries, very material to our knowledge of the period in which he lived, occasionally occupied the press, yet that with respect to himself little could be known; and all the effusions that friendship or business must have poured from his pen during a town life, and the reasonable produce of his retirement from a mind so essentially active, ALL, as if collected together in one mass destroyed BY AUTHORITY, had vanished away, and were entirely lost to posterity. This wonder was increased by our knowledge, that he had neither lived in obscurity nor died in want, but that the general love and admiration had constantly surrounded him; and that individual importance might best indulge its vanity by showing the communications of his esteem, or the private treasures that might remain with his family, of which there was a

natural and even learned guardian in his son-in-law, Dr. Hall.

Family papers have become a very interesting and valuable feature in our literary stores. In none such is there any fragment of Shakspeare. He had been patronised by Elizabeth and James, by Essex, and Southampton, and the two Pembrokes; had lived in the closest intimacy with Jonson and his friends; and yet not a single letter can be found subscribed with his name, nor one tributary effusion of his muse to show that he ever yielded to the NOT idle habit of congratulating success, and soothing the disappointment sometimes of cotemporary genius. Every probability, therefore, drew the conclusion, that the task of *collection* had by some affectionate hand been duly made; and that, perhaps, in *our* time a rich assemblage of Shakspeare papers would start forth from some ancient repository, to solve all our doubts, and add to our reverence and our enjoyment.

In this state of very reasonable expectation, the public is at length gratified to learn, that this precious repository has at last been found; that it contains a miscellany as rich and various as his genius—now sublime, now sportive; now dramatic, now critical—relics even of his person and his dress—his hair, his rings, his portrait, and his books, and plays of which the number was not at once ascertained; BUT a tragedy, called *Vortigern*, was certainly there, perfect and excellent, as the great national theatre would shortly feel by the immense audiences it would be sure to collect, when acted by so accomplished a company as was now under the management of Mr. Kemble. The terms agreed upon between Sheridan and Richardson on the one part, and the father, Ireland, for the son, then a minor, on the other, were that £300 should be paid down; or, in the Drury Lane mode, notes given at short periods, payable at Hammersley's; and this sum was, at all events, got by the forgery. The other part of the agreement was a division of the receipts (after deducting charges) for sixty nights! None of the parties seemed to entertain the slightest suspicion, that the piece *might* fail. Mr. Ireland, in his Confessions, has reported that Sheridan was by no means an enthusiast as to Shakspeare; yet that, upon reading a few pages of the manuscript he was going to buy, he was struck with some unstrung lines, and crude passages, as below the general character of the poet; but, as the inferiority might proceed from his youth, he still relied in the fullest confidence upon the external evidences of paper and ink, and the character of the penmanship.

As to Mr. Kemble all this time, his opinion, as one of the

most correct of our Shakspearians, was little regarded. He had by no means a mind easy to satisfy on such a question; and very frequently expressed to me his wonder, that Sheridan should have troubled himself so *little* about Shakspeare, when he really was a greater master of Spenser, than any other reader of the present day. I have myself heard him recite passages of great length and beauty; and his fondness for that poet, which began in his youth, originated, I think, in some such accident as that recorded of Cowley. He had whole cantos of the Faery Queene by heart.

From the beginning of the *invasion* upon Shakspeare, Mr. Kemble had born "a wary eye" upon the combatants; and he was duly informed by me of the successive *arrivals* from IRELAND, and of the reported conviction of certain venerable critics of the greatest name and authority. But his friend Malone had some strong suspicions, I believe, beyond *poetical* character; and neither he nor Steevens would go to Norfolk street, for the purpose of inspecting the papers. Mr. Ireland could not be expected to concede to the two commentators the royal prerogative of being waited upon in their palaces of Hampstead and Queen Ann street with the manuscript; and so converted the implied contempt of their refusal into a conspiracy against Shakspeare *himself*, unless he made his appearance under their own guardianship.

But to Mr. Malone I am confident Mr. Kemble owed that present of Hæmony, which kept him from the slightest danger, in the midst of the enchantment.

> "For by this means
> He knew the foul inchanter, though disguis'd,
> Enter'd the very lime-twigs of his spells,
> And yet came off." COMUS, v. 644.

The controversy as to the miscellaneous papers, it was said, had been on both sides overlaid. Whether Shakspeare, when in love and seventeen, had knotted his own hair and written soft nonsense to his intended bride—whether he wrote conundrums for Maister Cowley, and scrawled his own arms without knowing the *dexter* side of the shield; whether FOR, the proposition, was ever spelt FORRE, or the conjunction, AND, had ever been written with a final E, were points on which people might differ long, and contract animosities as violent, as trifles of a different kind, but not greater importance, have inspired, since men began to love themselves. But the whole concern was now to be submitted to another kind of test—the sovereign genius of our dramatic lord was about to display itself on a public stage, in an historical

drama never seen before, and his countrymen were to ask their heads and their hearts the obvious questions—"Are these the sentiments, is this the language, of Shakspeare?"

Ireland's fancy or his fears had converted that mild gentleman, Mr. Malone, into a furious Saracen, fighting with poisoned weapons against Vortigern; and he accordingly issued a hand-bill on the night of performance, bespeaking the candour of the audience. This his son could not procure, when writing on the subject; but it lies before me, and shall be preserved as the last instance of his *paternal* care of Vortigern.

"VORTIGERN.

"A malevolent and impotent attack on the Shakspeare MSS. having appeared on the eve of representation of the play of VORTIGERN, evidently intended to injure the interest of the proprietor of the MSS., Mr. Ireland feels it impossible, within the short space of time that intervenes between the publishing and the representation, to produce an answer to the most illiberal and unfounded assertions in Mr. Malone's Inquiry. He is therefore induced to request that the play of Vortigern may be heard with that candour, that has ever distinguished a British audience."

On the 2d of April the play was acted. In order to be quite right, the number of lines in it had been regulated by one of Shakspeare's acknowledged dramas; and there were some other points of imitation, which a fair critic will also offer to the reader's attention. The *Seven Ages*, from As You Like It, produced a division into *lustres*, not the most luminous; but the laughter was too excessive to allow the close of this brief history of man. The rash hand of our youth could not abstain from plundering the sublime *eulogy* on our composition in the play of Hamlet. It is astonishing that even young Ireland did not see, or that his friend Talbot did not admonish him, that a GREAT GENIUS does not repeat HIMSELF in this way. With the representative truth of nature, he shares in her abundance, and is known by his endless diversity. To resemble the mighty father of our drama, therefore, the forger must not think of the same things, but feel in the same manner.

If this be just as to mere descriptive or moral beauties, it applies with even greater force to the treatment of any PASSION. Let us consider, for a moment, that of *jealousy*, as it exhibits itself from the mind of Shakspeare. See how it is diversified by the *natures* on which it operates; view it in all

its varieties of temperament, in Leontes and Ford, in Posthumus and Othello. But neither these nor any considerations of prudence or criticism seem to have crossed our forger in his progress; confident that the world would be deceived, he appears, at times, to have *revelled* in the grossness of his impositions.

The principal members of the cast were, Mr. BENSLEY (shortly to close his theatric life) in the character of *Constantius;* Mr. C. Kemble *Pascentius;* Mr. KEMBLE himself *Vortigern.* Mrs. Siddons (prescient of some storm) had begged to be excused, and Edmunda was sustained by Mrs. POWELL; Mrs. JORDAN (I used to think a true *believer!)* Flavia; and Rowena, the beautiful Miss Miller. The eternal attendant, Tidswell, with two *aides-de-camp,* Misses Leake and Heard, were in waiting on Edmunda.

Great importance was naturally attached to the mode in which this sublime work of the author of King Lear should be ushered to the public audience. The laureate was flattered with this complimentary task. That true scholar and upright man, Mr. Pye, in the company of one of our most accomplished antiquaries, visited the mass of papers in Norfolk Street. For a short period, I remember, he believed, and resisted the positive judgment of his friend. But let it in candour or courtesy be remembered, that Mr. Pye's studies had lain chiefly among the Greek and Roman writers, and their earliest imitators, the Italians. Of our ancient language he had made no particular study. But when he came to look at the consequences of a positive *affirmation* by himself of the TRUTH of at all events a doubtful matter, he drew himself back with the aid of Touchstone, and placed his prologue under the convenient panoply of the *virtuous* conjunction.

> "IF in our scenes your eyes delighted find
> Marks that denote the mighty master's mind;—
> IF, at his words the tears of pity flow,
> Your breasts with horror thrill, with rapture glow;—
> Demand no other proof:
> But IF these proofs should fail;—IF in the strain
> Ye seek the Drama's awful sire in vain,
> Should critics, heralds, antiquaries join
> To give their FIAT to each *doubtful* line,
> Believe them *not.*"

It may readily be imagined, that this cautious introduction, however approved by the manager, would seem frigid to the *flaming faith* of old Ireland; but he softened his re-

jection of it to the decent remark, "that it did not strongly *enough* assert the authenticity of the play."

Another poet presented himself, who had not been alarmed into equal discretion, or whose usual critical judgment had been "blasted with extacy," and Sir James Bland Burges assured the audience, in his prologue, with undoubting confidence, that

"Before the court immortal SHAKSPEARE stands."

That court was thronged to suffocation; but the row in the front boxes, which I had secured, gave me the complete view of the box inhabited by the "great possessors" of the treasures; and no earthly sum could compensate the agonies, which I saw them endure that evening. INTEGRITY, TALENT, PROFIT were all in jeopardy—

"The storm was up and all things on the hazard."

The fatal mischief was the want of interest in the play—it was a dull chronicle put in action, enlivened occasionally by the lubberly awkwardness of Dignum and Phillimore; and now and then pressed into a laborious comparison with some REAL flight of the poet, too accurately remembered by the author. Mr. Kemble himself had one of these fine things in his custody, which he gave with remarkable energy to the house.

Vortigern.

"Full fifty breathless bodies struck my sight;
And some with gaping mouths did seem to mock me;
Whilst others, smiling in cold death itself,
Scoffingly bade me look on that, which soon
Would wrench from off my brow this sacred crown,
And make me too a subject like themselves.
Subject!—to whom?—to thee, O sovereign Death!
Who hast for thy domain this world immense.
Church-yards and charnel-houses are thy haunts,
And hospitals thy sumptuous palaces.
And when thou wouldst be merry, thou dost choose
The gaudy chamber of a dying king.
O, then thou dost ope wide thy hideous jaws,
And with rude laughter and fantastic tricks
Thou clapp'st thy rattling fingers to thy sides.
And when the solemn mockery is o'er,
With icy hand thou *tak'st him by the feet,*
And *upward so,* till thou dost reach the heart,
And wrap him in the cloak of lasting night."

This passage is a good deal in the taste of Dr. Blair's poem of the *Grave*, with some palpable struggles after the frantic

imagery of King John and the melancholy of Richard II. The reference to Falstaff's death and the *handy* action of poor Mrs. Quickly convulsed the audience with merriment.

The *solemn mockery* was indeed over, and a lasting night threatened to enfold the genius of the Pseudo-Shakspeare.

An Epilogue, written by Merry, and still keeping up the positive ascription of the play to Shakspeare, was spoken, with much effort, by Mrs. Jordan; and on the following morning the Treasury accounted with the elder Ireland, for the receipt of the night, 206*l.*: charges being first deducted. The son got 60*l.*, he tells us, out of the 300*l.* paid down; and 30*l.* more out of the 103*l.*; the half of the ONLY receipt out of the promised SIXTY.

Such was the close of this unadvised and unprincipled attempt upon the prejudices and purses of the public. It was a defeat from which there was no rallying—exposure brought on confession—sincerity, if it really spoke at last, spoke without belief; the father refused to credit the talent that was in his son:—alienation, resentment, shame, and unceasing perplexity, have followed from the opening of this modern CHEST of Pandora, out of which even *Hope* itself had now flown.

But let me find, in this record of ruin, a few lines to regret, that a really poetical mind should have been sacrificed to this tempting imposition. By whomsoever written, the following lines in the play of Henry the Second, came from the same source; and that source if a man is to be believed upon his oath, was the fancy of a youth, not eighteen years of age:—

> "*Henry.* That I could mellow now this iron tongue,
> And fashion it to music of soft love!
> But so it is, that from my childhood upwards,
> I have been bred in hoarse and jarring war.
> My spring of youth within a camp was spent:
> There have I sat upon a soldier's knee;
> Whilst *round my neck* was twin'd a GIANT ARM
> So *toughly set*, that one might say indeed
> The *sinews that did work it were of* BRASS."

Surely the young nurseling of a camp never sat for his portrait to an abler painter.

That Mr. Kemble was very deeply concerned at this failure, I do not affect to say. The proprietors of the theatre had thought proper to enter into competition with Mr. Harris for this play of Vortigern. But it was written, with the exception of Mrs. Powell, for the people who acted it: and as an affair of business, perhaps the speculation was worth the

trial. But the 300*l.* down was an extraordinary oversight; because the whole of that sum was lost, and all that had been laid out in scenery and decorations. The play, bad as it was, turned out the only source of profit to the Irelands. The BOOK was detected before it could be subscribed off or sold; and many reams of most magnificent paper hung as a heavy debt over the head of the editor. I incline to think that, had the illegible MSS. been kept, at all events, *longer* from the press, and been rendered the mere heralds of the plays, suspicion, it is true, could not have been banished; but discovery would have been averted or delayed. The plays, under the notion of curtailment (always necessary to Shakspeare it seems,) might have been purified sufficiently for success; our enthusiasm would soon have heightened to the *wonderful* any tolerable passages they might contain; and, at the PRESENT HOUR, some people might have thought it possible for Shakspeare to have written Vortigern! In the mean time, money, for either benefit nights or copyright, would have poured in upon the projectors of the scheme: but, when once the book exhibited the *autographs* to the world in general, the whole business was demonstrated to be a forgery. The MUSEUM had shown, that Lord Southampton, the patron of the poet, if he wrote at all to Shakspeare, communicated not only in legible, but elegant, penmanship. The signature of that nobleman never varied; and the handwriting is in every turn confirmed by the copy of Sidney's Arcadia, in my library (the folio, 1593); on the title page of which he has inscribed his name. IRELAND, not being able to tell how his Lordship signed himself, took his own left hand into use for the occasion, and made him scrawl his benevolence to the poet in characters that disgraced it. I shall leave this short chapter of IMPOSITION "unmixed with baser matter," for a reason that seldom occurs; namely, that, at least in literary subjects, none baser will easily be found.

> "Such then, said Una, as she seemeth here,
> Such is the face of Falshood; such the sight
> Of fowle Duessa, when her borrowed light
> Is laid away, and counterfesaunce knowne.
>
> Thus when they had the witch disrobed quight,
> And all her filthy feature open showne,
> They let her goe at will, and wander waies unknowne."
>
> *Faerie Queene*, b. 1. c. viii. s. 49.

CHAP. X.

Consequences of the failure to Mr. Kemble.—Miss Lee's Almeyda.—Mahmoud.—Kirk's Cruelties.—Mr. Bensley retires from the Stage.—Mrs. Kemble also.—Colman's—Elliston.—Acts Octavian.—Preparatory to Sir Edward Mortimer.—Preface to the Iron Chest.—Death of Dodd.—No true successor to him.—Lamash.—Difficulties in Drury.—Mr. Kemble throws up the Management.—Mr. Pitt, a Glance at him.—Elliston at Covent Garden.—Mademoiselle Parisset.—Dowton.—Thomson's Edward and Eleonora.—Alcestis.—Fortune's Fool.—Jephson.—Holman.—Holcroft.—Force of Ridicule.—Miss Farren.—Arnold.—Cure for the Heart Ache.—Mrs. Pope's death.—Garrick and that Actress.—Miss Farren's marriage.—Reynolds goes to Drury Lane.—Garrick's Monument.

SHAKSPEARE being now left to his legitimate honours; and the indifference or bad taste of the proprietors of Drury Lane having received not only a check, but an exposure, a good deal of irritation remained, and the ratification of Mr. Kemble's sentence by the public, however agreeable to himself, could not be expected to be palatable to those who had infringed upon his province to the detriment of their property! The elder Ireland, too, kept up a constant battery against Kemble, as having by his conduct injured his employers equally with the author of the play, by which one convenient moral principle is established; THAT a stage manager owes nothing to the public, to Shakspeare, to truth, to honour: he is a man bound to fetter his understanding; to lend a lie the confidence of truth, and swallow his own disgrace; although he has been as confident all along of the imposition, as he was of his own remonstrance. It was unfortunate, too, that the management was not prepared with any tragedy, that promised very brilliant success: the spurious was bad, and the genuine not good. Miss Lee, a lady of considerable talent, turned perhaps rather to romance than tragedy, had long been known to Mrs. Siddons, who accepted the character of Almeyda, in her tragedy so called. The principal male character, Alonzo, was acted by Mr. Kemble. This was a

poetical and busy play, but it lived only four nights, and it is therefore useless to go into its fable.

The opera of Mahmoud, by Prince Hoare, had been the last work of magnitude undertaken by Stephen Storace; and, as the piece had been powerfully written, Mr. Kemble acted the hero in his happiest style; and the opera succeeded to the full wishes of its modest author, who presented his profits to the widow of his friend, the composer. The elder son of the sultan being supported by our great tragedian, the younger was sustained by Mr. Braham, who thus commenced his exertions upon the stage of a theatre royal, to which he was destined to impart a perfection of musical science and execution hitherto unconnected with our opera, and to which eight-and-twenty years have never offered the shadow of a rival.

Mr. Hoare was now so popular, that a tragedy formerly composed by him upon the subject of Kirk's cruelties, and called *Such Things Were*, was acted on the stage of Drury Lane for Mrs. Siddons's benefit, on the 2d of May, two days after the appearance of his opera. As to his farces, they were constantly before the public.

The 6th of May, 1796, witnessed the last performance of Mr. Bensley on the English stage. He acted Evander in the Grecian Daughter, and embraced an Euphrasia worthy of him in the person of Mrs. Siddons. I have not, I hope, slighted the peculiar talents of this very accomplished gentleman, whose retirement added no few parts to the range of Mr. Kemble's performances: he could now, if he chose, relinquish Jaffier for Pierre, and Othello occasionally for Iago; but where, then, could be found an equal substitute for the conspirator and the moor? Wroughton did not quite rise to heroic tragedy; and Palmer, except in a few tragedies, hardly seemed to be in earnest. Barrymore was not above second rate; and Charles Kemble yet *young* and almost untried. Bensley was therefore a *serious* loss in the current business; besides the respectability that his name, his literature, and his connexions conferred upon any theatrical community. A retirement of an honourable kind was provided for him, the appointment of Barrack-master, at Knightsbridge; Mr. Bensley having originally served in the army.

There was yet another retirement this season from the same theatre. Mrs. Kemble had sustained a line of business on the stage, of a very interesting though not a striking kind. The reader will understand the cast by one instance, *Maria*, in the School for Scandal. Her comedy, though sprightly and sensible, had never any great force; and she had not in-

creased her voice with the dimensions of the theatre. Mr. Kemble now determined that she should quit the profession; and on the 23d of May, she attempted to take her leave. The task of talking forty verses *to* an audience would perhaps have been painful to her at any time; but connected with her present feelings, she could hardly articulate what her friend Greatheed had written for the occasion. Mr. Kemble came forward to receive her; and taking her hand, expressed, in his most gracious manner, his own sensibility for that constant kindness of the audience, which had attended her on that *spot* at all events, from her infancy.

The little theatre this summer was considerably strengthened; both the Palmers were engaged; and Elliston from the Bath Theatre, made his first appearance in Octavian on the 25th of June. It was, in substance, the Octavian of Kemble, some of the subtler spirit flown off; and the partial loss of what was poetical and picturesque compensated, as far as such wants admit of compensation, by the ardour of youth and a voice of very unusual power; manly beyond the age and figure of the actor. No young man in my experience ever exhibited higher promise: but Elliston at the very first was as high in the art as he could reach. I remember that Mr. Kemble expressed himself pleased at the performance, while at the same time he pointed out some passages, where the young artist was, what he used to call "*abroad*": but the audience were enthusiastic in their reception of Mr. Elliston; and it is yet a subject of astonishment, how he could allow *tragedy* to slip away from him. In the farce of My Grandmother, he acted *Vapour* on the night of his Octavian: such very opposite pretensions rarely preserve any balance. Garrick, Henderson, alone in our times, left it doubtful to which muse they most inclined.

It has been unfortunately my province to notice of late too many failures of established authors. The Alfred, or, as according better with the author, the *magic banner* of O'Keefe, was no more endurable than the other attempts to exhibit the great King upon the stage—and the Don Pedro, or Diabolo of Cumberland, merely afforded a noisy blusterer to John Palmer, of little benefit to the theatre. In short, the manager's season was, as usual, to depend upon himself, and on the 29th of August, the great attempt was made to render the Iron Chest popular, and, what followed of course, profitable to the author. Elliston was destined to Sir Edward Mortimer, and the piece, except as to curtailment, was unaltered. I have, upon the original production of the play, sufficiently spoken my *own* sentiments: and shall here therefore record

the opinions of some attentive observers, who, glad that the experiment succeeded at the Haymarket, saw grounds enough why equal favour might be missed at another theatre. It first then struck them, that no paring down could render the play otherwise than *heavy*, nor its interest of a kind calculated to give the *proper* enjoyment of tragedy; that the composition was more than barely turgid, particularly in the ravings of Sir Edward. By the just influence of the manager over his company, and timing the scenes with proper attention at the rehearsals, he had excited less languor, and NO disgust in his audience; but it was applauded only where the actor *laboured* for applause; and two or three violent explosions of Elliston were alone commended or remembered. It was, in fact, still a failure; from the unfortunate choice of a subject, the offspring of POLITICAL SPLEEN, and exhibiting a character that, in either manly or gentlemanly nature, never did exist, to disgrace our species. They said of his singular *preface*, that, if it added to his reputation as a writer, it took away much from his usual distinctions of *candour* and *temper*. They reminded him, that disapprobation had been expressed at Drury Lane *before* the entrance of Mr. Kemble; and that he had himself admitted the want of curtailment; and left it only as a duty of implication upon those, who conceive they should insult a man of genius, by pretending thus to condemn what had been written with full knowledge and long experience of the stage.

On the 12th of September, Mr. Harris opened his theatre for the winter season. The reader has been, no doubt, astonished, with the writer, at the hurry and ignorance, and confidence of architects; the new editions of their works, with corrections and additions, which came out every season. There is a literature of the day, and an architecture:—

> "You laid out twenty thousand pounds before;
> Well, do you feel it? Why then lay out MORE."

The entrances of the house were now altered. Its grand saloon, "a name without a thing," among ourselves, was converted into a coffee-room: what once held the celebrated Beefsteak Club was to produce comfort of a thinner kind, and afford space to the loungers in the lobbies:—

> "Of the camelion's dish I eat,—the AIR."

Seven rows of seats were added to the eleven of the centre boxes of the second and third tiers, which would merely admit

144 persons more than usual, and the produce of this accommodation nightly could be only 43*l.* 4*s.* to the manager, and not 140*l.* as had been asserted *falsely*: I think, libellously. To be serious, if possible, the manager always expected the *miraculous draught*, provided his nets could but be made large enough to contain the fish.

I am almost to exemplify the truism in the Night Thoughts:

"We take no note of time but from *some* loss."

On the 17th of September, 1796, the constant associate of Parsons in comedy, and like himself unrivalled,—the genteel, the airy coxcomb of another age, William Dodd, *tottered* into the grave. I reprove myself for a ludicrous expression, caught from the recollection of his manner; and besides, the death of such a comedian is indeed a *serious* thing:—serious, because much of the comedy of the last age has since absolutely wanted an interpreter. After the usual and indispensable noviciate in country theatres, during which Dodd had acted tragedy as well as comedy, he yielded to an invitation from Garrick in the year 1765, and on the 3d of October made his first bow in the character of Faddle, in the Foundling, a comedy by Edward Moore. From that time, under Mr. Garrick and his successors, he continued at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, where he had learned and practised his art for a period of more than THIRTY YEARS. How it happened I do not know, but no actor seems ever to have made Dodd his model; and, in consequence, all have been as unlike the accomplished beau of Cibber, as they were to his representative at Drury Lane. The tasselled cane, the china snuff-box, have lost their honours, and with the management of these weapons is fled the unembarrassed display of the person, and the mode of speaking pointed language. Here even Mr. Kemble's knowledge was unavailing. Bannister used to call him an excellent *judge* of comic acting, and so in truth he was; but not HIMSELF professing that part of the art devoted to the exhibition of life, where the *foibles* of man compose his *character*, he could not teach the way to excellence like Dodd's. Lamash had great advantages; but though, perhaps, he might have been said to *promise* one day to become a coxcomb, yet, as he never kept a promise of *any* kind, THAT, among the rest, was passed over. In one part only did he reach excellence and hold it,—the character of *Idle*.

The reader has probably born rather steadily in mind the two singular addresses to the public on the subject of the stage management of Drury Lane Theatre. One from King,

who had run away violently from responsibility without an atom of power; the other from Mr. Kemble, who seemed fully satisfied with the terms of his trust, who anticipated no difficulties that he could not surmount, and found himself in the condition of Pyrrha's admirer in Horace.

> "Qui semper vacuam, semper amabilem
> Sperat, nescius auræ
> Fallacis! Miseri, quibus
> Intentata nites."

But I have already given some strong indications that whatever opinion had been formed of Mr. Kemble, it was impossible even for HIM to be left to the direction of his own judgment. Influence, in a variety of ways, thwarted him; absurd schemes annoyed him; and, above all, difficulties arising from old debts and the building of a new theatre, really took him more time to remove, though only for the passing day, than all the proper business of his station, twice told. A variety of pleasant billets announced to the treasurer, that "a leading actor or actress would not *go on*, without the arrears of salary were paid up. One of the stage furnishers would not supply an article essential to a coming novelty, on all the pledges of the proprietors, unless Mr. Kemble would pass his word for the payment." His good nature often led him into such engagements; and, usually, money was found to keep him harmless. At length, I well remember, my friend had the mortification to be arrested on one of these engagements, and his indignation was extreme to be so wickedly disgraced. When the duty he had to discharge was considered, perhaps a *seat* should have been provided in a certain assembly, to secure the public appearance of the manager upon all occasions, by the inviolability of his person.* If ever there was one individual more particularly than another scrupulous as to fair dealing in the world, that one was Mr. Kemble; but his ways and means were all simple and direct. He was, through life, a child even in the forms of business; but, in the literal sense of the terms, a punctual paymaster, and strictly honest man. On this occasion the person got his money; and Mr. Kemble relinquished the management. Mr. Wroughton, it was announced, succeeded him; and the theatre opened on the 20th of Septem-

* "There is another and a more honourable reason, which was assigned in the case of Roscius, and applies equally to Mr. Kemble. "Whom the people of Rome know to be a better man than he is an actor; and while he makes the first figure on the stage for his art, is worthy of the senate for his virtue."

ner, after the plan of the minor house, with *three farces*. The distracted state of the concern was obvious in the very play-bills: and Wroughton was, perhaps, as little the object of envy, as any manager ever was: the house overwhelmed with debt; the salaries often unpaid; and succeeding also such a man as Mr. Kemble. There is one comfort that waits upon real greatness; a man loses no respect, by ceasing to command. The mimic world resembles the real. When Mr. Pitt, heaven knows why! was succeeded by Mr. Addington, it was the most amusing thing in this town, to see him walking along the Strand leisurely and alone, and enjoying idleness like a sinecure. Kemble now was at leisure for book sales, and even shop windows; and gave himself up to such amusements as were suitable to his taste.

Elliston had done so much at the Haymarket, that he was tempted to the greater scene of Covent Garden, and acted Cumberland's Jew there on the 21st of September. Murray followed him on the 30th in the Jew of Shakspeare, and the farcical character of Bagatelle. This gentleman was a permanent acquisition to the company, an actor of great feeling and propriety.

D'Egville, whom Mr. Kemble had placed at the head of the ballet department, had composed a very pleasing dance, called the *Triumph of Love*, for the purpose of introducing a novelty in the art in the person of Mademoiselle Parissot. She became very fortunately a perfect rage. As a dancer she was nothing; but her attitudes had a power of fascination, to which all ages among us rendered homage. Yet her look guarded her whole person from any *risque* in its display—it was a species of *floating grace*, that has peopled the air often in the angelic forms of the Italian painters; but never seemed to have pressed upon earth before. There was something also interesting in her story. She was a person of distinction; one of the victims of the revolution, who had turned her accomplishment into a *profession*; and, by immense application, at least needed only an occasional resort to mere attitude. Still, however, posture was her perfection.

I have already mentioned Cumberland's admiration of Dowton: it procured him an engagement at Drury Lane, and on the 11th of October he acted that author's Jew. In Dowton's serious speaking there is a slight tremor allied something to the enthusiastic, which excites on the stage in degree, what it produces more abundantly elsewhere, deep interest. His humour seems to the present day peculiar: it reminds me only of Yates; who probably reminded some very old stagers of Doggett. And this merits observation. Notwith-

standing the endless diversity among individuals, partial affinity and the demands of *language*, produce a classification both of mankind and their representatives. In stage history, therefore, the succession of actors to each other's business is regulated by that parallel talent, which though never quite touching, (that is, become *identical*,) is sufficiently near, because it takes the same course; and a little over or a little under its predecessor, arrives at the same end.

At whose recommendation I know not, probably Mr. Kemble's, who had been, as we have seen, looking to Thomson for additions to Coriolanus, that author's Edward and Eleonora was on the 22d of October revived for himself and his sister. But the heroic devotion of the Princess is better to hear of than see; and accordingly is detailed by Daraxa to the audience in the third act. Now this scene fades to nothing before its original, the Alcestis of Euripides. The student of poetry will be improved as well as gratified by comparing the description of the two attendants with each other. He will find in the English poet no one additional circumstance of either grace or pathos, and the exquisite simplicity of Milton's Greek favourite muddled away into common cant and philosophical abstraction—"spotless white"—"the altar"—"the eternal mind," and so on, instead of nature's own actions detailed in the obvious descriptive terms, and genuine emotion bursting into its only language. Alcestis, when the day of her generous self-devotion arrives, laves her pure limbs in not purer water from the fountain: and then, *woman* as well as pagan, turns over her wardrobe, and selects from her apparel a splendid robe; and thus gorgeously arrayed for this great sacrifice of the heart, implores of theg oddess, Vesta, unions less disastrous for her children. She then punctiliously visits *every* altar in the palace; there repeats her vows, and decorates them with flowers. "She heaves no sigh, she sheds no tear," and preserves the "natural ruby on her cheek" until she enters her chamber, and presses the nuptial couch: then first she softens into grief, and apostrophises the scene of her chaste endearments. She kisses the unconscious bed, breaks from it, and returns as often, bathing it with her tears. Then, as her children hang upon her robe, she raises them in succession, and folds them to her breast. Among the weeping servants she next administers consolation; speaks to each of them as she tenders her *right* hand, and permits the meanest to speak to her in return. But I must here break off, however reluctantly, to relate that Edward and Eleonora was a flat and creeping business, and never called for by a second audience. Very conveniently for the author's reputation,

after it had been cast and rehearsed in the year 1739, at Covent Garden, the Lord Chamberlain interposed his, that is, the ROYAL veto, against the performance of the Leicester House Tragedy. To a reader of our own times it has nothing very formidable. There might originally have been something more. Party, too, is very dexterous as to applications, which perish with the times.

My friend Reynolds, on the 29th of October, presented to the town one of his annual pleasantries called *Fortune's Fool*, made up from the results of a trip to Gretna, and the trickery of a match-making woman. The reader is by this time aware of the grand secret, and therefore ready to burst in upon me with, "Well, but tell me what was Lewis in the piece?" and, "Spare your arithmetic; never count the turns, once and a million." Mr. Lewis, sir, I answer, since you will not allow me to tell Reynolds's story, (indeed I never knew a man who could tell *one* of his stories after HIMSELF,) Mr. Lewis was a Welch gentleman of great sprightliness named Haphazard; Mr. Quick cultivated the black-letter; Mr. Fawcett—but enough, I see you understand much of his design, and can guess at its execution.

I have had great pleasure in commemorating the esteem of Mr. Kemble for Captain Jephson. That author had written a tragedy upon the subject of the *Clemenza di Tito*, called the Conspiracy. But the "Roman portraits" of this author were denied the popularity of his other writings. A scanty dramatis personæ on such a subject is not to the taste of an English audience: and the crowded business, with which Shakspeare fills his Roman stage, is absolutely essential, unless, with the unsullied splendour of Addison, you have such a personage to present as CATO himself. Mr. Kemble was the Sextus of the Conspiracy; Mrs. Siddons, Vitellia; Palmer, Titus.

At the other theatre Holman followed his friend Reynolds with an opera, called *Abroad and at Home*, of which the success was considerable. It was at times difficult to ascertain the parts in a composition proceeding from the little knot of intimates, Andrews, Reynolds, Morton, and Holman: but it is quite apparent that much of Abroad and at Home must have come from the pen of Holman. It was prose more pointed and of a better tune, such as an actor will, if he writes, always endeavour at, as easier to deliver. Cibber is a master in this well-balanced dialogue—see *passim*, the Careless Husband.

On the 6th of December, Holcroft again occupied the stage of Drury Lane, with a comedy called the *Force of Ridicule*.

It was perdurably damned. The play had been put up for Tuesday the 29th of November; but Miss Farren did not come to the theatre to dress, and at seven o'clock Palmer had to announce that she was too ill to leave her room. But she had a large arrear of salary due to her, and took the occasion, that a new play afforded, of insisting upon her money: as that did not arrive in Green Street, the lovely actress did not arrive at the theatre. At another season, I will insert some of Mr. Kemble's own supplications to Peake, the treasurer, very characteristic of a theatre under Mr. Sheridan.

On the 10th of December, young Arnold succeeded in a musical afterpiece, called the *Shipwreck:* his father, the doctor, composed for him; and he began, as an author, to rise from under the sarcasm of Colman; who, when dunned to accept his pieces, and pay a debt to the father, said "the two demands involved a contradiction—it was impossible to do BOTH."

Morton had written very carefully a comedy, which, like those of Reynolds, depended principally upon Lewis, and, on the 10th of January, 1797, it appeared under the title of *A Cure for the Heart Ache.* The Rapids and the Vortexes were among the most amusing characters of the modern stage. At the age of 52, Mrs. Pope was selected by the judgment of Morton to perform one of his youthful heroines; but she was taken ill during the run of the comedy, and, after a struggle of some weeks, expired on the 15th of March, 1797.

The loss of such an actress as Mrs. Pope, really indisposes the mind to remember either the *Friend in Need* of Hoare, or the *Raymond and Agnes* of Farley; yet they were both highly serviceable to the theatre. I have alluded, in my own sketch of her as an actress, to the eulogium pronounced upon her by Mr. Harris. I am of opinion, that a fitter occasion will not offer, to combine her with another manager, Mr. Garrick himself. The last time he acted the crown of all his achievements, King Lear, Miss Younge was his Cordelia; and her hand, as it is usual, was fast locked in his at the dropping of the curtain. He led her thus into the Green Room; and, remembering with a sigh, that one more night would terminate his dramatic existence, he exclaimed to her, "Ah, Bess! this is the last time of MY being your father! You must now look out, therefore, to be adopted by some one else." "Why then, sir," said Miss Younge, "give me a father's *blessing:*" and she threw herself gracefully upon her knees before him. Garrick kindled with the enthusiasm of his favourite, and replied with great energy, "God bless you!" Then,

raising his eyes to the rest of the performers, he solemnly added, "And may God bless you all!" His emotion was too high to trust longer to language, for he instantly retired.

Mrs. Pope lies in the west cloister of the abbey, between the graves of two celebrated men, Dr. Dupuis, a great harmonist, and Sir Richard Jebb, a celebrated physician.

But the stage suffers sometimes from other tyranny than that of death, and we were shortly to sustain certainly an equal loss at the demand of RANK. Elizabeth, Countess of Derby, daughter of James, Duke of Hamilton, dying on the 14th of March, 1797, the Earl of Derby announced his intention to Miss Farren of elevating her speedily to a coronet; and on the 8th of April, she appeared for the last time on the stage in the character of Lady Teazle. She declined addressing the audience herself on this occasion, and stood at a slight distance, supported on the arms of Mr. King and and Miss Miller, while Wroughton announced her departure, and apologized for the *silence* which it had been arranged was to be preserved by the Countess elect. The ten lines spoken by Wroughton had the character of Lord Derby's muse, who now verified his old prediction—

"Perhaps a FARREN may *return no more*."

She, however, advanced after the verses had been spoken, and made the three established curtsies, to the right and left sides of the house first, and then, in the front of the stage, to the general mass of the people. The house on this night was remarkably brilliant. There was a strong curiosity among the ladies, to see how she would *look* upon this occasion. But it was not a head that *could* suffer. Her dwelling-house had been long graced by the portraits of the Derby family; and the union was not less *desired*, than expected, by the children of the first marriage. On the 1st of May the nuptial ceremony was performed at the Earl's house, in Grosvenor Square, and the *parties* left town immediately for the Oaks.

The intimacy between Mr. Wroughton and Reynolds, and the complete possession of the comic stage now secured to Mrs. Jordan, led the dramatist to offer his comedy of *The Will* to Drury Lane Theatre, and it was accepted. To be sure there was some good-humoured astonishment expressed at the boldness of a Covent Garden author thus invading the domain of genuine comedy; and the almost miracle of getting their salaries, from the success of this very play, hardly removed the film from the eyes of the company. Mrs. Jordan's Albina, in a *naval* uniform, was a point of peculiar

interest. It has more bustle, I think, than any of his comedies. Andrews and Rogers together, contrived a remarkably pleasant parody on the Seven Ages of Shakspeare, as an epilogue to this play; the best point is the school-girl—but the wife in the *patent coffin* was in course the favourite.

Covent Garden, as a sort of balance, gave, on the 25th of April, a comic opera called the Italian Villagers, written by Prince Hoare, rather in Shakspearean language; and this, again, was followed by a frequently pillaged play of Dr. Hoadley's, called The Tatlers. Mrs. Siddons took her benefit on the 1st of May, this season, and Kemble and she acted the Wilmots in Lillo's Fatal Curiosity. At the conclusion of the evening's entertainments, forth came the Queen of Tears, to weep over the loss of *comedy*, and wish every happiness to her *wedding day*—even *Fatal Curiosity* was pressed into the service, and the *Deuce was in 'em*, if with such honours and talents, the noble pair were not completely happy! This sad trash was gently insinuated to come from Mrs. Piozzi. I should incline to think, it must have taken more cups of tea than ever she poured out in ten hours for Dr. Johnson, to lower her really brilliant *spirit* to such a composition.

On Sunday, the 11th of June, the mural monument, put up in Westminster Abbey to the memory of Garrick, was opened to the public. It is Sir Joshua's *thought*, of Garrick between Comedy and Tragedy, utterly spoiled by a Mr. Webber; and Mr. Pratt has inscribed upon the marble twelve lines of the most wretched plagiarism that ever rhymed together. When, some years afterwards, I saw the venerable and tasteful Dr. Vincent turn his back upon him, to pronounce his affecting tribute over the grave of Cumberland, I could not but wish that, as dean, he had been curator also of monuments, and ensured that all inscriptions, in the abbey of Westminster, should be in classical Latin, or, at least, unvulgar English.

It should be recorded, although I think the mode of the relief improper, that on the 14th of June, a benefit was given to the widows and orphans of those brave men who fell in the glorious action of the 14th of February, 1797, under Lord St. Vincent. On this occasion, every description of force was brought into the field. The entertainments selected were, the Country Girl, Peggy's Love, No Song no Supper, and the grand ballet of Cupid and Psyche: and the Covent Garden company was strengthened by Mrs. Abington, Mrs. Jordan, Sig. Storace, and the whole *corps de ballet* from the Opera. The receipt was immense. It may hardly be ne-

cessary to explain myself further in the objection hinted at above; but I am decidedly of opinion, that the state is the only medium through which public services should be rewarded. The people constitutionally act through their representatives. I dislike any of these *amusing* supplements to the solemn propriety of a grant from Parliament.

CHAP. XI.

Losses of the Stage.—Old Macklin dies.—Heir at Law.—Character of Fawcett.—Mr. Boaden's Italian Monk.—Palmer perfect.—Miss Decamp in Rosalba.—Mrs. Litchfield.—Mrs. Abington.—Happy Prologue for her by Colman.—Miss Farren, how succeeded.—Cheap living.—Mrs. Crawford.—Monk Lewis.—Castle Spectre.—Mr. Kemble in that Play.—Morton's Secrets worth Knowing.—Colman's Blue Beard.—The Stranger.—Mr. Kemble.—Mrs. Haller.—Character dissected.—Perfection of Kemble in the Stranger.—Novelties.—Blue Devils.—French Fable.—Le Texier.—Cambro Britons.—Palmer's Farewell to the Author.—His Death.—Benefits for his Children.

We have recently seen too many of the sons and daughters of the stage taken from it; and on the 11th of July, 1797, the father of the stage, old Macklin himself, expired. He appears to have been born on the 1st of May, 1690, and consequently to have attained the extraordinary age of 107 years 2 months and 10 days. That so little should be known of his life, is one of the remarkable parts of his character. He had most probably omitted to put down the transactions of his youth, and in his decline a few floating, nearly vague recollections, about the middle of his existence, were all that he could attempt to detail. I have already laid before the reader my opinion of him as an actor, and shown something of the critical force of his mind. What remains is to notice the place of his interment, which was a new vault under the chancel of St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

The character of the stage history is best described by the great master of the stage itself—it is compounded of extremes, and passes from melancholy to mirth with the swift transition of a scene.

> "With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage,
> In equal scale weighing delight and dole,"

is not more characteristic of the majesty of Denmark, than it is of the few adjacent pages. The reader will be entirely of this opinion, when he shall find the *Heir at Law* the next feature to the decease of Macklin. That most delightful

comedy was acted the first time on the 15th of July, the evening of the day on which the veteran was buried, and Munden, after attending the funeral, had to perform a new character in the play.

Whatever doubt might exist as to the Iron Chest, not the slightest was ever heard about the *Heir at Law*. It was one of the lightest and gayest among a better description of modern comedies; not absolutely original, for vulgarity has often been driven from usurped and ill-suited honours; but still so rich in manners, so whimsical in situation, so broad in humour, so happy in combination, that it was received as a *chef d'œuvre* by every order of critic. But Fawcett must share with Colman the honours of Pangloss. He here at once attained the perfection of the art as a comedian—distinct impersonation. He was enough of the *scholar*, to understand, to enjoy, and to display either the vanity, the pedantry, or the servility of the *tutor*. His untiring ardour, his rapidity, and his happy blunt interjectional point of—*hem!* placed him out of the reach of rivalry in the part. Let me seize the opportunity, afforded by his merit as an actor, to say something of Fawcett as a man. In every situation in which he has met me through no *short* life, he was always plain, direct, sincere, and steady. He never truckled to the diurnal dispensers of an actor's fame—he could not flatter, and he did not care for flatterers. He performed, as a manager, a hundred kind acts without ostentation; and your interest never drooped in his hands, nor slept in his custody. If I were to inscribe his grave, I would do it in the eulogy pronounced by Lear upon his faithful Kent, his Caius,—

"'Twas a rough Honesty."

The order of this work compels me again to speak of myself; but the recommendation of the illustrious doctor, just commemorated, shall be attended to.

"On their own merits modest men are *dumb*."

Hitherto I had written nothing for the summer Theatre. I sent, through that worthy man, Waldron, the Italian Monk to Mr. Colman. He told me that he liked it much, and that he would bring it out with all the care that could be given to it; and that; as far as the means of a little theatre and a short season would go, decoration as to scenery and dresses was at my command. Marinari invented some beautiful Italian landscape for the piece, and it came into rehearsal under

favourable auspices. Dr. Arnold looked into Gluck for a sublime chorus of nuns, and wrote, himself, in a very powerful manner. The piece was strongly cast, and Palmer was pleased with the character of Schedoni. All however rested upon him, and Colman told me in my ear, that "I must take care of him, or he would not know one word of it." I got hold of him one day, and secured him effectually. I told him "that Schedoni offered to him an opportunity of showing both his manager and the public that it was not absolutely necessary to engage Mr. Elliston for tragedy of any strength, while HE was in the theatre." His indolence was banished at once; after rehearsals he twice begged that I would read Schedoni to him in his dressing room; he used his pencil frequently as to emphasis, and occasionally asked the reason of any conception differing from his own. To the astonishment of the manager and the whole company, he went through the character, on the last rehearsal but two, quite perfect in the words, with the part undisturbed peeping out of his coat pocket. Colman said slily, "You are safe. He is in earnest." And he was really so; he acted it beautifully, so as to draw tears from George Steevens, who honoured me by his presence. But it was altogether fortunate. I had been the means of drawing forth some unsuspected declamation from that charming young actress Miss Decamp. I received her, I remember, at the wing, as she came off the stage as Rosalba, in triumph, with an applause from the house following her for some minutes; and her grateful feeling led her to say openly, "Dear Sir, you will make my fortune, if you write for me in this manner." There is something in dramatic success so intoxicating, that even the profits of your achievement come but coldly after it.

Mr. Kemble's brother Charles acted Vivaldi in the play, and was rapidly advancing in the art. It was not very difficult at this time to see the strong interest which he felt in the success of my heroine; and the green room of the Haymarket arranged, by anticipation, the union, that some years after took place between him and Miss Decamp.

The winter season of 1797-8 opened under circumstances extremely unfavourable. Among the novelties, which secured permanent reputation in the art, I remember Mrs. Litchfield with sincere pleasure. She acted at Covent Garden Theatre, on the 20th of September. Marianne in the Dramatist, a character of great sprightliness; but her true powers were in the train of the sister muse. Had she been favoured with a figure rising to the majestic, and features of greater prominence, the powers of her mind, so seconded.

would, perhaps, still have retained her in the very highest rank of tragedy.

Some aid the manager hoped to find in the return of Mrs. Abington to the scene of her former victories; but her person had become full, and her elegance somewhat unfashionable; yet she still gave to Shakspeare's Beatrice what no other actress in my time has ever conceived; and her old admirers were willing to fancy her as unimpaired by time as the character itself. Colman, to introduce her, wrote one of the happiest prologues in my remembrance. A few points I shall try to preserve—a degree of attention which he himself may not feel disposed to pay these temporary effusions. The first thought is tender.

> "When melancholy counts each friend gone by,
> True as religion strings her ROSARY;
> The eye grows moist for many in silence laid,
> And drops that *bead*, which nature's self has made."

Time and casualty ravage the mimic world with the fury even of war.

> "Here death to a chill grave some actor carries,
> Here Hymen beckons,—and an actress marries."

Can we not, to supply these chasms, lure back some favourite of the comic muse?

> "Thalia calls—and Abington appears:
> Yes, Abington—too long we've been without her,
> With all the school of Garrick still about her.
> Mature in pow'rs, in playful fancy vernal,—
> For NATURE, *charming* nature, is *eternal*."

Mr. Harris brought out, on the 12th and 13th of October, two young actresses of very superior merit—Miss Betterton, since Mrs. Glover, in Elwina; and Mrs. Spencer, afterwards Mr. Pope's second wife, in Monimia. For the first of these ladies I had fancied the succession to Mrs. Abington in comedy; to the second, some venerable admirers assigned the innocent sensibility and pathetic sweetness of Mrs. Cibber. How far the conveyance of the rich gift was perfected, I really am too *young* to judge. Mrs. Spencer was a very lovely woman, and a very interesting actress.

The reader sees here what he will find to be invariable in stage history, that, whenever any accomplished actor or actress dies, TWO, at least, must be engaged to supply the place —FIVE, frequently to compensate the loss. At Drury Lane,

Wroughton had to look about him on Miss Farren's retirement, and his search produced two actresses of the second and fourth rates—Miss Biggs and Mrs. Humphreys; but Mercutio will touch it for us in the way of comparison. "Laura to his LADY was but a kitchen-wench, Dido a dowdy, Cleopatra a gipsy, Helen and Hero hildings and harlots: Thisbe a gray eye or so, but *not to the purpose*."

Reynolds was now a seeming transfer to Drury Lane Theatre, and on the 21st of October produced a second comedy, called *Cheap Living*. The title of the play proceeds from the character of Sponge, performed by Bannister, Jun. But the hopes of the piece were on the youthful shoulders of Sir Edward Bloomley, an adept, at sixteen, in all the fashionable vices, and acted by Mrs. Jordan. The baronet is also as wise as he is wanton, which the author, on *this* occasion, certainly was *not*.

Mrs. Crawford returned again to Covent Garden Theatre, on the 23d of this month, to act Lady Randolph to the Young Norval of Harry Johnstone. As Reynolds's mother was the particular friend of that great actress, I wonder he did not prevail upon her to save the growing infirmities of age from recollection so injurious to her present appearance.

There was a benefit, as usual, for the sufferers by the victory of Lord Duncan over the Dutch admiral Winter, whose letter to his masters, written on board the ship of his conqueror, is one of the most pathetic things in all history. Cumberland wrote an Address for Drury Lane, spoken by Wroughton, but inferior to Richardson's upon Lord Howe's success.

Cumberland seemed to be now writing, *vice* Reynolds, at Covent Garden—for in his False Impressions, a comedy acted on the 23d of November, though the fable and the characters were only his novel of Henry produced in the action, yet the action was brisker than he allowed himself previously, and he seemed to be complying, against nature, with the prevalent taste. His persons of the drama were few, but Miss Betterton, in Emily Fitz-Allen, had the best of them.

The Drury Lane management was now at an end, when a lucky hit by *Monk* Lewis, as he was called from his romance, filled the treasury nightly. I allude to his dramatic romance, called the *Castle Spectre*, acted for the first time (the *last* is not yet known) on the 14th of December, 1797. But it is too strongly impressed upon the memories of all my readers to require in this place any detail of its story. The precedent given by myself was followed with beautiful effect, and I yet bring before me, with delight, the waving form of Mrs. Powell, advancing from the suddenly illuminated

chapel, and bending over Angela (Mrs. Jordan) in maternal benediction; during which slow and solemn action, the band played a few bars, or rather the full *subject* at all events, of Jomelli's *Chaconne*, in his celebrated overture in three flats. Pardon, my dear Kemble, the captivation of an unearthly music. I will attend upon Percy and yourself immediately.

There was one remarkable point of character in Mr. Kemble; that, *out* of the management, and where responsibility was upon others, he was the gentlest of all great actors—"He would DO *any thing*." So that when he was cast into Percy, in the present piece, a sort of Harlequin hero, who gets into his enemy's castle after his Columbine, Angela; he had to climb from a sofa to a Gothic window, and, being alarmed by his *black* guards, he has to fall from the height flat again at his length upon the said sofa, and seem asleep, as they had before seen him. This he did, as boldly and suddenly, as if he had been shot. When people complimented him upon his unsuspected agility, "Nay, he used to say, gentlemen, Mr. Boaden has exceeded all compliment upon *this* feat of mine, for he counselled me from Macbeth, to

"Jump *the life to come*."

But it was melancholy to see the abuse of such talents. It is only in a barn, that the CATO of a company should be allowed to risk his *neck*.

Morton, on the 11th of January, 1798, again met with his usual success at Covent Garden Theatre. His *Secrets worth knowing* were later wills to dispossess sordid wretches presuming themselves heirs, and papers entitling the needy to considerable affluence. This comedy has not kept its station so firmly as his *Way to get Married*, *Cure for the Heart Ache*, and *Speed the Plough*; but, at the time, was thought to be not at all inferior to his other productions.

The critic, who, in the preface to the Iron Chest, had made himself so merry with the ponderous machinery, the splendid processions, the elephants and the triumphal cars of Drury Lane Theatre, was induced to lend himself to the great work of corrupting the public taste, and succeeded beyond all competition in the dramatic romance of Blue Beard. This nursery tale no doubt was intended to repress female curiosity. It is dramatically drawn out by Mr. Colman, with striking effect and occasional pleasantry. The music, by Kelly, was remarkably well conceived, and the parts were all acted in the happiest manner imaginable. But one of the performers made herself a fame out of it so absolute and engrossing, that

perhaps it was injurious to the fascinating actress, and stopped her progress in the profession. I allude to the Irene of Miss Decamp. The personal display, the ballet action, the turret, and the piercing tones of her voice, conspired to establish a scale of her merits from which it was hardly possible to descend. The public acquired a taste for her pantomimic exhibition, and they have never encouraged, to their value. the greater qualities that she possessed.

As to the stage preparations of the piece, they hung fearfully the first night: and Colman, as before, needed curtailment. But the scenery and dresses were really splendid, and the machinery ingenious. It got smooth by repetition, and must have brought immense receipts into the house. With such singers as Crouch, Decamp, Bland and Kelly, must be remembered the rare skill of Suett, whose notes on the words "I'll not hear you," were clear, distinct, and true beyond all comparison. I have had enough, perhaps too much of *imitations* in my life; but as to poor Suett, always resembled, let me say, that Caulfield was, by the side of him, absolutely *another self*. Mr. Holcroft not only occupied the stage of Drury Lane, on the 25th of January, by his comedy of *Knave or not*, but is believed to be the real author of another at Covent Garden, on the 13th of February, called *He's much to Blame*. Of these the latter was the livelier production. The diligence and variety of Holcroft were astonishing. The favourite theme of his school was the *energies of the mind*. He possessed himself a share, among ourselves, at all events, quite unexampled. The facility of Lope de Vega would be incredible, but for the compositions actually printed.

We left Mr. Kemble enjoying the fame of his *agility* in the Castle Spectre. The doctrine of compensations is true in the dramatic world as well as the moral; both his head and his heart were soon to experience a very serious call indeed; I allude to the preparation and performance of the *Stranger*. Although I had many times perceived, upon entering his library, pretty strong indications of the present study, yet I certainly never knew any other take such severe hold upon his countenance and general manner. He relapsed from his usual kindness into gloomy abstraction; and admirably neat as he was in general, I saw for some days a carelessness about his person.* On the 24th of March, the result astonished

* In his clothes and dress Mr. Kemble preserved the Ciceronean medium, "a perpetual cleanliness, without the appearance of pains; free from affectation of singularity: and avoiding the extremes of a rustic negligence, and foppish delicacy."

the town in the performance of one of his finest efforts, the *Stranger* of Kotzebue.

The tendency of this play is, I presume, what it has been styled, immoral. Our sympathy with Mrs. Haller may be generous or just, as you will; but the wretched victim of perfidy, the silent record of unutterable anguish, the Stranger, as he looked and moved in Kemble, was of all exhibitions that I have ever seen the most affecting.

The popularity of the Stranger made it a subject of contention. The acted play was the translation of Thompson, who has given to English readers all the really valuable plays of the German theatre. But there were others, I presume, equally skilled in the German, among whom was a Mr. Schinck, probably himself a native, and this gentleman had sent his own translation to Drury Lane about a year and a half earlier, and received it back most likely unread, and with such an excuse as it suited the mood or the business of the time to give it. Mr. Schinck had saved the honour of Mrs. Haller. "She had eloped, a frightful crime! but saw her error just before the purpose of her seducer was accomplished." Thompson, thinking rightly, that the distress must be less as the crime was lowered, left her story as he found it. From any unfair proceeding as to Mr. Schinck he sufficiently vindicates himself; but he literally owed his reception to the good fortune of sending his piece to Mr. GRUBB, whom the great angler had now hooked into the concern. He was a good-natured person, sufficiently humble not to be too busy; and he was allowed occasionally to advance an *opinion*, but more frequently his *money*. Mr. Grubb put it into the hand of Sheridan, with I suppose, a request that he would *read it*. I dare say it was the first German play he ever *did* read; he became fond of the interest, and touched upon the language occasionally; and a most pathetic song for Mrs. Bland, written by Sheridan. "*I have a silent sorrow*," and sung in the Stranger's hearing, thrilled to every heart, in a *melody* from the genius of the Duchess of Devonshire.

I suppose I shall be accused of *heresy* from the true faith, but I have no sort of doubt that Mrs. Haller, as a great part for a performer, is incalculably inferior to the Stranger. It is hardly a *character*—it is never distinguished by manner. Mrs. Haller superintends the family, takes a walk in the park, sends out her heart in charity, as some alleviation to the silent sorrow that preys upon it, but the forms of life invest her—she must control even her countenance. She has sinned beyond forgiveness, and hopes to steal through life in penance and unknown. I have no doubt that, on the first

night, Mrs. Siddons felt all this greatly enfeebling her exertion, for she certainly sunk under her brother. The triumphant success of the piece, and the sure sympathy that waited upon her *tears* in the great scene, raised the whole by degrees to a respectable level, but the grandeur, the intellectual dignity of the person, all assured you, that Mrs. Haller herself must have been as different a being from Mrs. Siddons, as Lavater could have drawn, had he intended to exemplify the two qualities of fortitude and weakness. Let us look a little at the account that this lady gives us of herself. "She knows that her husband's confidence in deceitful friends, and the great expenses, that she herself occasioned, had embarrassed his circumstances and clouded his spirits. Yet, instead of curbing him in the lavish outlay of his fondness, she thinks—(hear it, ye worshippers of Mrs. Haller!) she THINKS, that he denies her pleasures and amusements *still within their reach.* She accordingly begins to fancy him cold—she has lived with him three years; she has born to him the pledges of their mutual love;—yet this wife, this mother, listens to a man who had not even the usual captivations of his craft (for she tells you that in every thing that merits either *admiration, respect, or love,* he was far, far *beneath* her husband); she believes the tale of that husband's love for some other woman; looks at a few forged letters; demands no explanation; pursues him to no detection; but elopes, as a thing of course, with her seducer, tears away their mother from the unoffending infants, and in a few weeks finds out that she is a wretch." Spirit of the lovely IMOGEN, speak to this woman, and to thousands more, the noble, the beautiful rebuke given to Iachimo, who had planned precisely the same attack, and adduced himself as the witness of the disloyalty in Posthumus, which he reported!

> "Away! I do condemn mine ears, that have
> So long attended thee. If thou wert honourable,
> Thou wouldst have told this tale for VIRTUE, not
> For such an end thou seek'st, as *base* as strange."

What could there remain in such a profligate as this, of either sound principle or just feeling,* worth disentangling

* Hear the purest spirit of modern times, Cowper.

> "Virtue and vice had boundaries in old time
> Not to be passed: and she, that had renounced
> Her sex's honour, was renounced herself
> By all that prized it; not for prudery's sake,
> But dignity's, resentful of the wrong.

from the fatal web that either pleasure or credulity had wound about her? Had the author lowered the husband to the worthy man of plain exterior and retired habits, and invested the seducer with all those personal captivations that by their power over the senses corrupt the reason, and silence the conscience, an apology might rise (a bad one in truth) proportioned to the temptation, and irregular passion really at length, expire at the feet of returning virtue. But here PROFUSION in a husband's *difficulty*, and ADULTERY without *passion*; two features of depravity, that pronounce the head and the heart of woman utterly worthless.

But enough of the lady. Let me endeavour to describe Mr. Kemble in her husband. The great and peculiar merit of him then was, that the by-play, as it is termed, was a language constantly displaying the character, and suitable to that alone. He had weighed every thing—he had calculated every gesture through the piece. The utterance was equal to the action. Some beauties, by their prominence, start from my general recollection, and a few shall have such a feeble record as I can give of them. Upon a harsh impeachment of his honest servant's motives, R. Palmer said to him, and well said it, "Sir, that did not come from your heart." The answer of goodness betrayed into injustice, simple, at once, and final, is, "FORGIVE ME." Kemble's look, his sigh, his tone in this ejaculation, was his whole history conveyed in two short words.

Another beauty of his masterly elocution courted the nice ear, when his former friend, Steinfort, in the ardour of affectionate surprise, exclaims, on seeing him, "CHARLES!" Kemble's rejoinder, "Steinfort!" was equally removed from either surprise or joy; all emotions but of one class had died away, and he bore in *that* a living death about him.

But there was a beauty of action in the scene with his wife, that showed how happily he evinced the most refined delicacy; and how his very *hands* spoke, what could in no way be conveyed by language. When the Countess has put into his possession the details of her infamy, that he may divorce himself from her polluted person—the *pause* for a few seconds; the *deliberate tearing* of the papers; and the way in which he let them *escape* rather than throw them from his

> 'Twas hard perhaps, on here and there a waif,
> Desirous to return, and not received:
> But was an wholesome rigour in the main,
> And taught th' unblemished to preserve with care
> That purity, whose loss was loss of ALL."
>
> *Task*, Book iii.

hands; were so consummate a proof of his feeling and judgment, that it remains before me with no parallel in any other performance.

I have been the fuller upon this occasion, because as succeeding actors do and must form themselves on this great model, all that is now to be seen is certainly Kemble's, as well as what will never be seen again. I will suppose, (I shall not hastily *allow* it,) that the *minds* of some among his successors may be equal to his; but a countenance *as* expressive does not exist; nor a figure, near to the stage requisites of his form. As I hope on most occasions to *ascertain* causes fully adequate to the effects, so I mention among those contributing to the perfection of Kemble's *Stranger*, his actual freedom from the toils of management. It left him with a single object; and here we had the full benefit of his abstraction. I do not think that he ever equalled his first performance of the Stranger.

As I have every *proper* regard for Sheridan, I wish Thompson, when he printed the play, had been either so kind or just as to inform us WHAT, specifically, were those alterations and additions by which, as he allows, the effect of the play was so improved. The POCO PIU, the little heightenings of so great a master, should be known. It was thus in Henry the Sixth, that Shakspeare went over the work of Marlow.

From dramatic genius, thus heightened by every care that could attend upon it, I am to descend to one of Cumberland's fading shadows of life, a comedy called *The Eccentric Lover*, who appeared upon the stage of Covent Garden Theatre on the 30th of April, but, upon the opportune illness of Quick,

> "Shrunk in haste away,
> And vanish'd from our sight."

On the 12th of May, a daughter of Mr. Murray's acted Perdita for her father's benefit, and displayed talent of the right sort. This young lady, in the year 1802, became the daughter-in-law of Mrs. Siddons, by a marriage with her eldest son.

The rest of the winter season displayed a little novelty among the benefits, but very little talent—O'Keefe failed in a comedy for Mrs. Jordan, called, rightly, She's Eloped—it was heard of no more. Smith returned for a night to act *Charles* for his friend King's benefit, and except a slight failure about the legs, I thought him quite unimpaired either in figure or spirits, by a recess of ten years.

The Haymarket season of 1798 opened with a new farce, by Colman, called Blue Devils, from the French of Patrat; it

is a sketch of English gloom, in the person of a Mr. Megrim, meditating suicide. from absolute weariness of existence. He is relieved from his doldrum by opportunities presented to him of making others happy. This reminds me of a more interesting fable worked up with great skill, which that enchanting creature Le Texier read once to us at Lisle street in manuscript :—

The master of a poor inn is burdened with the presence of a yet poore poet, and would put an end to his daily supplies, but for the oppositionofr his wife, whose vanity is gratified occasionally by the poet's numbers. Matters, however, are proceeding fast towards his ejectment, when a stranger guest, of a most portentous exterior, whom they discriminate only as *l'homme noir*, attracts our poet's attention The strange inveighs against the miseries of existence, and touches in a masterly way those of the scribbler before him. The poet dines with the man in black, and despatches the contents of the dishes with that extravagant voracity which lays in for appetites to come. The last cover being removed, a brace of pistols display themselves, and the English miserable invites the French to close life's feast, agreeably to the November ritual, by the bullet. But self-destruction is by no means the passion of the French poet. However, he does not venture to dispute its propriety—he only wishes to delay the consummation until he hears the fate of a dramatic sketch that he has presented to the theatre. The man in black considers this to be but reasonable, and *en attendant* requests to be indulged with a hearing of the drama. The poet promises to read the piece to him, and they separate.

At the appointed time the bard comes fully prepared, takes his seat before his sable friend, and commences the reading with a *catalogue raisonné* of the persons and their business in the drama. The scene, I need not say, is that of their own *auberge*—he describes the host, the hostess, himself, and then the English hypochondriac by his name, Johnson. An involuntary astonishment bursts from the lips of the hearer, who is then informed of the circumstances under which he left his family, and they are all described, the wife, the daughter, nay, the *fille de chambre* is not forgotten ; they arrive, it is said, at the inn, in search of their unhappy friend. The door of the room in which they are sitting here suddenly opens, and the persons who enter are of course no creatures of the poet's brain, but the actual family of our melancholy countryman, whom the poet had seen on their arrival, and whose business his usual address had elicited. His happy invention suggests to him this dramatic introduction of the travellers ; but all anticipation by the audience is carefully avoided.

Le Texier read this, as he did every thing, inimitably. Whether he himself was the author, I did not ask at the time, and since have inquired in vain. Mrs. Piozzi, when on her travels, met with, I suppose, *Patrat's* sketch, and said Andrews should have it. Le Texier's she has not alluded to, and probably never saw.

The Castle Spectre had given an agreeable picture to the lovers of the marvellous, and I had turned my attention to a rival shade, taking care to supply an adequate cause for supernatural interposition. I had also, in the bold resistance of Llewellyn to our Edward, an opportunity of meeting the

menaces of foreign invasion, in the year 1798, with patriot sentiment, and I had, in the Bards of Cambria, the means of showing the bard of Gray in action, with all the aids of appropriate scenery, dress, and music. I drew the real habiliments of the bards, by his permission, from Mr. Fuseli's sketch-book; and Johnston, the machinist, came from Drury Lane Theatre to superintend all our equipments. By the parallel, I carried up my shade through the grand window of the cathedral, and some very admirably painted clouds devolved about the figure contrived by Marinari.—We prospered, and upon a hasty revisal of my play, I am tempted to say that it contains some passages which I am not even now displeased to have written. But Mr. Kemble, I remember, wrote to inform me, that they had been commended to him by his friend Jackson of Exeter, an elegant critic, and a composer, superior to any praise of mine.

While we were in rehearsal, Mr. Palmer one morning came upon the stage, and took me aside. "He said that he could not quit London without in a particular manner thanking me for the part of Schedoni. He expressed his concern that he could not aid me on the present occasion; and with very singular emotion, wished that I might always meet with men as sensible to kindness as he himself should ever be." He even wrung me by the hand, and took his leave in haste and in tears. I should perhaps have thought of this but as "a trick of custom," and so it might really be: but I know nothing of the secret anticipations of the mind. Palmer quitted London to return to it NO MORE, for on the second of August he expired suddenly on the stage at Liverpool, while acting the character of the Stranger. On the 29th of July, he dined with some friends belonging to the company, and appeared to be low spirited: but on Wednesday the 1st of August, he gave the Lyar, with all the vivacity of earlier days. On the 2d, to a very genteel audience, he acted the character of the Stranger with powerful effect, till he came in the third act to the remarkable passage—

"There is *another* and a *better* world."

He had no sooner uttered the words, than he fell backwards, heaved a convulsive sigh, and immediately expired. He was carried off the stage, and surgical aid speedily procured, but the veins yielded not a drop of blood. Aickin endeavoured to make the audience acquainted with his death, but was unable to articulate a single word. They were informed of their great loss by Incledon.

On the 6th of August, 1798, he was buried at Warton, a village near Liverpool, and all the coaches that could be obtained followed his hearse. Mr. Palmer was the most general actor that ever lived. He was, after Henderson, the best Falstaff and Comus; he was the *only* Sir Toby Belch, Stukely, Surface, Sneer, Villeroy. In the long list of tyrants in tragedy, and fine gentlemen in comedy, he was better, oh, how much better, than all other men! and in the *Brushes* and *Duke's Servants*, the *Lyar*, and a myriad of others, beyond even the hope of an author. I should put his age at near 57. Palmer, before the unfortunate business of the Royal Theatre, had indulged himself in rather expensive habits, and at his house in Kentish Town, seemed to affect the splendid hospitalities of Barry. His noble figure and graceful manners threw him into a variety of temptations, difficult to be resisted, and sworn foes to professional diligence and severe study. But, such as he *was*, during the whole of his course as an actor, he was fairly entitled to the greatest salary in the theatre, as he combined the most general utility with talent often surprising, frequently excellent, and always respectable.

The Liverpool Theatre, on the 13th, gave a free benefit to the children of Mr. Palmer, and Holman spoke an address upon the occasion written by Mr. Roscoe—there is too much of it—it is exceedingly metaphysical—but has some nervous lines. This proper example was followed in town by the summer company, who went over to the Opera-house on the 18th of August, and there acted the *Heir at Law* and the *Children in the Wood*, for the benefit of the four youngest orphans; and Drury Lane Theatre on its first night, the 15th of September, with melancholy propriety, performed the *Stranger* itself, with Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, for the same object. In the farce Mrs. Jordan and Bannister both gave their aid, and the Citizen detained a very crowded audience to the "last scene of all."

CHAP. XII.

Winter Season of 1798-9.—Mr. Kemble opens with the Stranger.—Emery comes from York.—Kotzebue.—Lovers' Vows.—Ramah Droog.—Novelties.—Reynolds returns to Covent Garden.—Laugh when You Can.—Aurelio and Miranda.—The Author's account of it.—Kemble most kind as well as excellent.—Holman, Votary of Wealth.—Feudal Times.—Mr. Morris.—Kotzebue's Birth Day.—Mr. Kemble in Montval.—Pizarro, done by Sheridan himself.—The strange Prologue.—Sheridan's feelings during its performance.—Kemble in Rolla.—Mrs. Jordan.—Mrs. Siddons.—Elvira considered.—Success of the play.—Political Feelings.—Mr. Pitt.—Play printed.—Colman's.—Novelties there.—Fête at Frogmore.—Reflections.

I HAVE already informed the reader that the winter season of 1798-9 opened with the Stranger. The common notion was, that the last words uttered by poor Palmer were parts of a passage commencing with an apostrophe to the Deity, and that the *agony* attending their delivery had destroyed the actor. The house was therefore in considerable alarm till the *real* Stranger had got over words that had proved so fatal. And some degree of surprise *buzzed* along the seats when Mr. Kemble, in the proper tone of resignation, uttered the calm address to Francis, in the first scene of the third act:

Stranger.

"Have you forgotten what the old man said this morning?
'There is another and a better world!' Oh, 'twas true.
Then let us hope with fervency, and yet endure with patience!"

From the Bath or the York companies, most of our great actors have proceeded. There is little mystery in this: the demand for excellence usually finds it or creates it. We had Mrs. Siddons from Bath; Mr. Kemble from York. By this I mean to say, that Bath and York were the scenes of their greatest popularity—their theatric *homes*. From York we had received an excellent actor in Fawcett, and were to owe another, more limited, but equally perfect, in Emery. He

had found in the rustics of Morton, matter remarkably suited to his talents; and in truth he was destined to exhibit the entire range of his ability in that author's comedies—from *Frank Oatlands* to his *Bobby Tike*, exhausts nearly the whole *soul* of the countryman, and the *art* of Emery. His Caliban was a brute, it is true, and, what he should not have been, a Yorkshire one; but there was no poetry in his conception of the character. It has been always *roared* down the throats of the vulgar: but Caliban is not a vulgar creation. It is of "imagination all compact."

We had now begun the long line of Kotzebue's dramas, and the *passion* always found about them ensured their success, if even respectably acted. Mrs. Inchbald brought out *Lovers' Vows*, at Covent Garden, on the 11th of October. Frederick was supported by Pope, and the Agatha and Amelia by the Mrs. Johnson from America, and Mrs. Johnstone, the wife of Henry Johnstone, a lady of very considerable talent in melo dramas. With any other merits or demerits the world has sufficiently amused itself, to be tired, I hope, by this time of the subject.

My old friend Taylor, who has written *more* prologues in *less* time than any bard that ever did live, on the occasion of *Lovers' Vows* supplied one of his best. The allusion to all our *Spectres* is very happy and *pointed*—

"The monstrous charms of terrible delight."

Mr. Palmer, of the Temple, sent on Munden, the rhyming Butler of the play, with an epilogue of about seventy rambling, but sufficiently ludicrous verses.

The glorious victory of the *Nile* was in course to be dramatised, and T. Dibdin launched a pantomimic entertainment of song, dance, and dialogue, at Covent Garden on the 25th of October. Cumberland, catching at something between Cowley and Dryden, supplied a prologue, spoken with great animation by H. Johnstone.

At the same theatre, on the 12th of November, Cobb, with some of his India knowledge, brought us entertainment from the Malabar coast; and his comic opera of *Ramah Droog* flourished like an adventure of Bandannoes and Pullicat Romals. The females of this piece are all of them unknown to fame, but their names look astonishing in stage history. Mrs. Mills and Mrs. Chapman, with the six Misses Mitchell, Waters, Sims, Gray, Wheatley, and Walcup, and I hope, in the language of that great stage manager, Peter Quince, "here is an opera fitted." It had one charm

of great value about it: namely, that Richards painted a series of scenes from the exquisite designs of Daniel, made, as every body knows, by him in India.

At Drury Lane, Prince Hoare translated and adapted the French piece of *Camille*, or *le Souterrain*, and with some clever scenery, and music by Dussek, a man of science and invention, it was successful under the title of the *Captive of Spilburg*. Dussek, sitting in society at the piano forte, and *improvising* upon the *progress* and *succession* of the PASSIONS, was an object of perfect astonishment, and never to be forgotten.

Mr. Cumberland followed on the 5th of December, with a comedy, called *A Word for Nature;* it was but a word. It had the slightest of all his plots, nothing whatever of character, and the interest was never the subject of the smallest doubt or alarm through the whole five acts.

At Covent Garden, Dibdin, with a most diverting farce, called the *Jew and the Doctor*, preceded the return of Reynolds on the 8th of December to his head quarters. His title was a lesson equal to any in Cornaro's treatise, *Laugh when you Can*. Here he had all his tried friends; Lewis lighter than air in *Gossamer*, and Fawcett in *Sambo*, and a *Bonus* in Munden;—Holman, the Popes, the Mattocks, the Gibbs, and in Emily, Miss Mansell. Madame Genlis's Souterrain was to have the honours of both our houses, and Cobb's Albert and Adelaide, the rival of the Captive of Spilburg, was done at Covent Garden on the 11th. It was a useful AFTER-piece, and, as every thing unfortunately now was, splendidly got up. Steibelt and Atwood between them furnished the music. We now half lived upon the Germans and the French; and our native drama was estimated as a very secondary business indeed by managers, who turned their authors to foreign plays, foreign spectacles, foreign romances—to every thing *foreign* to English habits, feelings, and character.

I had hitherto never written a part for a man, entitled by his friendship as well as talent to every attention from me. The masterly presentment of Ambrosio in the Monk, by Mr. Lewis, though not original,* struck me forcibly in the perusal, and I worked, as I thought, rather successfully upon the sub-

* Without travelling farther back, *Ambrosio* and his *temptations* may be found under the names of Father Henrick and Miranda, in the novel called the *Fair Jilt*, written by Mrs. Aphra Behn. Mr. Kemble's recollection of her writings, and of this particular story, made him assign the name of *Miranda* to my heroine; and might lead him to suggest the *high birth* of the friar as a ground for dispensing him from his vows, and ultimately uniting him to Miranda.

ject, in a sort of Colman Drama of three acts. I showed it to Mr. Kemble, and he at once decided that he would act the Monk. "But," he said, "why *three* acts! Why innovate upon established usage?—a play should be in five acts, for this sound reason among others, that it affords *four* pauses; and consequently the RELIEF which is necessary to the attention. In a full piece you *must* occupy the usual three hours, and you create a heaviness by compelling the audience to listen to an uninterrupted business, or act, one hour long. Don't tell me that there may not be matter enough in your subject for *five* acts: because then I ask how you expect to be endured, if you make business only sufficient for three acts occupy the *time* of five?" To all this I really had no good reply, and consequently made none at all. He himself suggested some *additional interest*, and Aurelio and Miranda went, through Wroughton, to Mr. Sheridan himself. He read it with great kindness, and wrote his opinion in the margin of every scene. Of many parts he expressed decided admiration—he gave me but little additional trouble. The play was accepted, and Mr. Siddons by letter informed me "that though Miranda was not quite so important in the piece as Mrs. Siddons was accustomed to be, yet that it was such a part as *they* should never refuse, and that she should act it for me." All therefore looked successfully; the greatest dramatic genius admired my work, and the greatest theatric talent had resolved to act it. But it was weak in its structure: the two last acts were entirely an *hors d'œuvre*; and, what was worse than all, a storm of indignation was excited, that so *immoral* a work as the Monk should be resorted to for the purposes of an exhibition, however moral in its tendency. There were not wanting an *accident* or two to help on the work of prejudice: yet the play survived all opposition for seven nights, greatly applauded in its best scenes, but in my own judgment unfitted for a longer existence. It was first acted on the 29th of December, 1798.

Yet let me say, that all I had ever conceived of either the *dignity* or *sanctity* of the monacal order, was as nothing compared with the awful grace with which the whole figure of Kemble became invested.—The nearest resemblance that picture affords is to be found in a FORM, that it would be *irreverence* to name upon such an occasion as the present: but the expression of the head, and the folds of the drapery, seemed to be studied in the transfiguration of Raphael. That noble gentleman, the late Duke of Leeds, came to me in the Green Room, and begged to present me to the duchess in her box, though he candidly avowed that his *religious feelings* hardly

allowed him to tolerate the powerful effects, which he saw produced upon the stage. But it was not only on the first night that Mr. Kemble displayed for me his highest powers—*prevention* as to the subject—*failure* in some weaker parts—*violent clamour*—all on this occasion were unheeded by him, and he exerted himself to the *last*, for his friend, the author, as if his own reputation were at stake, and somehow involved with the success of the play.

"For ALL our thanks."

I may mention that when, after the play, Mr. Kemble had put on his *lay* habiliments, and we were both admitted into Mrs. Siddons's dressing-room, our friend, the late Dr. Charles Burney, came in, and told us in a few words, that "the subject was fatal, and we should not do." I was myself decidedly of his opinion.

Holman, on the 5th of January, 1799, presented the town with a comedy, called the *Votary of Wealth*. It is a satire against the irregular attainment of riches—where the passion renders the being who entertains it *false* in every thing, and the dearest of his friends is as certainly the prey of his rapacity, as "the indifferent children of the earth." Mr. Holman, as usual, distinguished himself by some scenes powerfully written; but, in the general structure of the fable, he reminded one greatly of his two comic associates; and, indeed, they frequently wrote in conjunction. With all this the public had no concern: their entertainment was in the merit of the work, and there was certainly much interest in the Votary of Wealth. It is a singularity, but of the comic writers to whom I have alluded, the *strong* interest in their plays is hardly ever female—in this, looking to the *sympathy* of an audience, they would be in error, but that the comparative *talents* of the sexes in the Covent Garden company rendered their choice an affair of discretion.

It is so dangerous to attack! The even-handed justice of time usually makes to itself a sport, as well as a duty, to have the "Engineer hoisted with his own petard." So Mr. Colman, who had assailed Kemble as the translator of Lodoiska, now, I suppose, blushed to scribble over *Feudal Times*, in which Lodoiska itself was imitated, and the Castle Spectre and Blue Beard invited into his *Banquet Gallery*. Here was a *mine* sprung in the close of the piece with great effect. On the subject of this eternal stage practice, let me say, to the credit of their sappers and miners, that it invariably succeeds; and the conflagration of the fortress only

lights the lovers to each other's embraces. A *blow up* at the end of a piece was formerly a metaphor and signified its perdition; it is now a reality, and ensures its success.

That ingenious gentleman, Mr. Morris, in his *Secret*, a comedy acted at Drury Lane Theatre on the 2d of March, wrote a very interesting part for Mrs. Jordan, called Rosa. It was now become no secret, that she rather inclined to the characters of deserted daughters, plundered orphans, and the whole family of sentiment, rather than to the indulgence of her own proper talent in the comedies of the last age.

The liberality of young Dibdin, on the 16th of this month, bestowed *Five Thousand a year* upon Mr. Lewis for his benefit; of which that gay but most prudent manager took the proper care, and the town, for many nights together, congratulated him upon his success. To drop the allusion, the sketch of the interest of this comedy indicated at least *design*, and exemplified a common danger. The accession of a young gentleman to unexpected fortune leads to the prudent determination, on his part, to avoid the tempting baits of wine, play, altercation, and, above all, *love* By very naturally contrived incitements he falls into every mischief he had resolved to shun, and the audience enjoyed the dilemmas of so provident a personage.

Kotzebue again supplied the theatre with permanent attraction. His *Birth Day* prepared for us, after city translation, by young Dibdin, was acted inimitably by Munden, Fawcett, and Mrs. Davenport. The scenes between *Bertram* and *Junk*, in the hands of Munden and Fawcett, were as finely contested acting as I ever saw upon a stage. Though *naval* characters, they evidently sprung from the military pair in Tristram Shandy; yet there was positive genius in the appropriation, by Kotzebue, of our Yorick's greatest achievement.

Mr. Kemble had only one novelty of much consequence during the remainder of the season. For the Rev. T. S. Whalley, he acted the Old Count Montval, in a tragedy written on the subject of a father condemned to a dungeon by his son—and Mrs. Siddons the wife of the parricide. It was poetically written, but being, as to its fable, drawn from a popular French miscellany, and having been some time in the manager's hands, his dungeon interest had been anticipated in the Castle Spectre, and the reverend poet was partially defrauded of his effects. Whalley, if I remember rightly, was the friend of Pratt and Hayley; and of a better poet than either, Potter of Scarning, a man admired by Mr.

Pitt—the unrivalled translator of Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

The novelty to which I have particularly alluded was the celebrated part of *Rolla*, in Sheridan's alteration of Kotzebue's Pizarro, a play of which the performance is never likely to cease, and of which the heroic character of Rolla is the *soul*. It had been many months under the correction of Sheridan, who not only gave that sustained character to the dialogue, which a German sometimes invades by trivial or familiar language, but he added some very glowing thoughts occasionally, and a passage of infinite value in the address of Rolla to the Peruvian soldiers. As I do not remember that any critic has pointed out these *original* effusions of the mind of Sheridan; as they are moreover the *only* specimens of tragic composition from his pen; and, as the reader will subsequently find, were noticed by Mr Pitt, I shall here insert the most prominent, to which Kotzebue never supplies more than a fit place to receive them. Perhaps the trial of Warren Hastings led him to fill his mind generally with images of the higher emotions, expressed in the richest terms, though not in the metre of poetry.

THE ADDRESS OF ROLLA TO HIS SOLDIERS.

(Act II. Sc. 2.)

"My brave associates—partners of my toil, my feelings, and my fame! Can Rolla's words add vigour to the virtuous energies which inspire your hearts?—No—you have judged, as I have, the foulness of the crafty plea by which these bold invaders would delude you.—Your generous spirit has compared, as mine has, the motives, which, in a war like this, can animate THEIR minds, and OURS. THEY, by a strange frenzy driven, fight for power, for plunder, and extended rule.—WE for our country, our altars, and our homes.—They follow an adventurer whom they fear, and obey a power which they hate. WE serve a Monarch whom we love—a God whom we adore. Where'er they move in anger, desolation tracks their progress!—Where'er they pause in amity, affliction mourns their friendship! They boast, they come but to improve our state, enlarge our thoughts, and free us from the yoke of error!—Yes—THEY will give enlightened freedom to OUR minds, who are themselves the slaves of passion, avarice, and pride. They offer us their protection—Yes, such protection as vultures give to lambs—covering and devouring them!—They call on us to barter all of good we have inherited and proved, for the desperate chance of something better which they promise. Be our plain answer this:—The throne WE honour is the PEOPLE'S CHOICE—the laws we reverence are our brave fathers' legacy—the faith we follow teaches us to live in bonds of charity with all mankind, and die with hope of bliss beyond the grave. Tell your invaders this, and tell them, too, we seek no change; and least of all, such change as THEY would bring us."

Then that beautiful description of a mother's joys given to Cora, in the first scene of the second act—

Cora. "The ecstacy of his birth I pass,—that in part is selfish; but when first the white blossoms of his teeth appear, breaking the crimson buds that did incase them,—that is a day of joy: next, when from his father's arms he runs without support; and clings, laughing and delighted, to his mother's knees,—that is the mother's heart's next holiday: and sweeter still the third, when e'er his little stammering tongue shall utter the grateful sound of father! mother!—Oh! that is the dearest joy of all!"

Again, in that splendid soliloquy of Elvira's, at the end of the third act—

"'Tis well! 'tis just I should be humbled.—I had forgot myself, and in the cause of innocence assumed the tone of virtue; 'twas fit I should be rebuked—and by Pizarro.—Fall, fall, ye few reluctant drops of weakness—the last these eyes shall ever shed. How a woman can love, Pizarro, thou hast known too well—how she can hate, thou hast yet to learn. Yes, thou undaunted! Thou whom yet no mortal hazard has appalled! Thou on Panama's brow didst make alliance with the raving elements, that tore the silence of that horrid night; when thou didst follow, as thy pioneer, the crashing thunder's drift, and stalking o'er the trembling earth, didst plant thy banner by the red volcano's mouth. Thou, who when battling on the sea, and thy brave ship was blown to splinters, wast seen—as thou did'st bestride a fragment of the smoking wreck—to wave thy glittering sword above thy head—as thou would'st defy the world in that extremity!—Come, fearless man—now meet the last and fellest peril of thy life—meet! and survive—an injured woman's fury, if thou canst."

Also that elegant apostrophe to nature, spoken by Rolla in the fourth act—

"O, holy nature! thou dost never plead in vain. There is not, of our earth, a creature bearing form, and life, human or savage—native of the forest wild, or giddy air—around whose parent bosom, THOU hast not a cord entwined of power to tie them to their offspring's claims, and at thy will to draw them back to thee. On *iron pinions* born—the blood stained VULTURE cleaves the storm—yet is the plumage closest to her heart *soft* as the cygnet's down, and o'er her unshell'd brood, the murmuring ring-dove sits not *more gently*."

There are several other additions, but these are the most striking, and from the first part of the second scene in the fifth act, the translation ceases, new incidents are introduced, and, excepting the death of Rolla, the conclusion is totally different, particularly in the re-appearance of Elvira, and the fall of Pizarro, through her intervention. I am not quite sure, but I think he used a translation made for him by Mr. Geisweiler, a German possessing both languages, and who afterwards rendered Sheridan's alteration back into German, confronted page for page by the English. Every care was taken in the getting up of this splendid drama—scenery and dresses of the most striking beauty were invented, and Kelly, who prepared the music, introduced some very eloquent

strains, which he had composed formerly, and they were always greatly admired. It was first acted on the 24th of May, 1799. The original cast should be noted here. It shows that the reward of tractable diligence at length arrived. Alonzo was entrusted to Charles Kemble, who, in the third act in particular, rendered very important service.*

Pizarro,	Barrymore.
Alonzo,	C. Kemble.
Las Casas,	Aickin.
Atuliba,	Powell.
Rolla,	Kemble.
Elvira,	Siddons.
Cora,	Jordan.

How unwillingly Sheridan always worked, may be judged by the following fact. Instead of preparing a prologue that should bear some remote reference to the interest of his play, he sent King on to speak one, written by himself, to be sure, but which had preceded Lady Craven's *Miniature Picture* in 1780.† It breathed of neither *heroism* nor *love*—but takes the *dust* in Rotten Row in the person of a cit on his hack Bucephalus; and sauntering with white-rob'd Misses in Kensington Gardens, listens to the small questions of the promenade, so vastly usual, that they require no answer. The verses for music in this piece, I believe, were supplied by Grub, always happy to be employed.

Although in substance this play was Kotzebue's, yet Mr. Sheridan seemed to feel for it a full paternal solicitude. He sat in his box through the night with Richardson, in a state of unappeasable anxiety. The reader will hardly conceive the object of his *greatest* fear; but I tell it to him with the fullest knowledge of the fact. As to Mrs. Jordan in Cora, he was sufficiently miserable—"she could not speak a line of it; but he was dissatisfied with Mrs. Siddons; she had not *fallen in* with his notion of the character; and at her opening of this precious piece of profligacy, he exclaimed, "*There*, there, I told you, Richardson, that she never would fall into the character!"—and he was querulous to the last degree.

* Sheridan was so sensible of this, that for a long time afterwards he used to salute him as "*his* Alonzo."

† Cicero, we are told, upon looking over his treatise on *Academic Philosophy*, discovered that he had used the same preface that he had prefixed to his book on *Glory*. It was his custom, it seems, to prepare at leisure a number of different proems, adapted to the general view of his studies, and ready to be applied to any of his works, which he should afterwards publish. Sheridan, I apprehend, did not abound in either *prefaces* or *prologues*

With Kemble, however, he was perfectly transported; as HE declaimed, he said to Richardson, "Beautiful! sublime! perfection! nothing ever equalled THAT." At length the great actress burst through the embarrassment of her situation, and produced a strong feeling in the house; on which Richardson, a cooler judge, retorted his own terms upon him; and when he expressed his pleasure, and was beginning an—"*I told you*, Richardson," in another key, "YES," said his friend, "and remember *I told* YOU, Sheridan, that she *would* fall into it at last."

Whether Mrs. Siddons would fall into the character, or fall with it, was not very long a question. She elevated Elvira even into *respect;* and, as her brother said to me, upon my praise of his Rolla, "NAY, nay, I have every thing to aid me; it *is* a noble character. Carry your wonder to Mrs. Siddons; she has made a heroine of a soldier's *trull.*"

The term used by my friend for this lady is somewhat strong, but a little reflection will leave it undisturbed. With the *glory* of Pizarro expired Elvira's love of him. Virtue of the noblest kind is, it seems, her passion. She meets in Rolla a being of the true temper: he has remained, at the risk of his own life, that his friend might escape from prison. This admirer of glory labours by every art to convert him into an *assassin;* arms him herself for the occasion, and leads him into the conqueror's tent, that he may stab him as he lies asleep. Rolla is *himself*, and awakes Pizarro from his slumbers. Elvira is detected and imprisoned; but she makes her escape at a very critical juncture, and again arms Alonzo with a weapon, by which Pizarro is at last destroyed. She then, with infinite propriety, decides upon devoting herself to a religious life, to expiate her original foible. What the cloister might gain it is impossible to say; but it is sufficiently evident the *profane* world had no great loss of her.

I really do not wonder at Sheridan's doubt whether Mrs. Siddons *would* fall into such a character.

The noble portrait of Mr. Kemble bearing off the child, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, expresses most accurately the vigour and picturesque beauty of his action. The herculean effort of his strength—his passing the bridge—his preservation of the infant, though himself mortally wounded, excited a sensation of alarm and agony beyond any thing perhaps that the stage has exhibited. But, in truth, from his entrance to his death, the character was sustained with a power of elocution, a firmness of deportment, and an intensity of expression, that he alone could combine together.

All this excellence produced effects fully corresponding—Pizarro was acted thirty-one nights in succession, that is, leaving out the Sundays in course from the 24th of May to the 29th of June; the season did not close till the 4th of July. It may be observed that Addison's Cato, with all political factions to aid it, on its first run was acted only eighteen times. The continued performance of Pizarro was therefore, in the *serious* drama, up to that time unprecedented. Comedy and opera have been allowed, perhaps, in a few cases, an uninterrupted progress equal to this; but I presume tragedy to have intermitted, more on account of its superior fatigue, than from any inferiority of attraction.

There was a political point, of no mean importance, obvious in this play; we had Mr. Sheridan (*formerly* furious in the cause of France, invoking *destruction* upon the heads of the British Cabinet, and coveting for himself the "*blow of vengeance*") now speaking with the heart and voice of his country, his perfect abhorrence of the conduct and the principles of revolution; and urging by every oratorical charm his countrymen to resist and disdain the arms and arts of France. If any very furious Whig, anxious for the political wisdom or the consistency of Sheridan, should remind me that this intruded harangue is in the character of a Peruvian, and its invectives pointed at a Spanish invader; I think myself able to prove, that they were inserted *because* they applied to the condition of this country. If he were to add, that even this concluded nothing as to the *real* sentiments of Mr. Sheridan: I confess I should feel indifferent on that point, provided he allowed, as I think he must do, that, even in Mr. Sheridan's opinion, Rolla but uttered the feelings and the sentiments of the English people.

Among his audience Sheridan had the honour to number Mr. Pitt. The minister smiled significantly at the speech of Rolla; recognised some favourite figures, that he had *before* admired at the trial of Mr. Hastings; and pronounced Mr. Kemble to be "the noblest actor that he had ever seen."

The press sent forth 30,000 copies of this play, which was read with the greatest avidity; and the author, after it had brought at least fifteen thousand pounds into the theatre in its first season, in a strain of martial gallantry, not very usual among managers, declared that "Mrs. Sheridan's approbation and delight in its applause were to him the *highest* gratification its success had produced." Here, however, appeared to open a vein of wealth which, followed out with decent industry, might have relieved the theatre and its proprietor soon from a crowd of embarrassments; and yet I shall almost

immediately have to show the usual want of resources, and the old menaces of retirement from the *scene*, if money were not provided by the treasury.

The summer theatre presented to us the current rage, Kotzebue, and his *self immolation*, under the title of Family Distress. Pope sustained the miserable victim, Maxwell; and though the scene was laid in London, the spectator *doubted* that such complicated wretchedness could here attend an honest but unfortunate man. Yet in London does not the sharper seek an *associate*—does not the attorney find *false witness?* Is not the man absorbed in domestic affliction of his *own*, however inconsistently, indisposed to attend to that of *others?* All her charities, and she is among cities the first for charitable provision, all her charities must frequently fail to reach the timid and retiring virtue, abashed as well as ruined —destitute and silent.

The Castle of Sorrento, which Fawcett had fully prepared for, was extremely attractive *here*, and in Paris had been acted 60 nights in succession. Le Texier had employed his astonishing talent upon it during the winter. I think Fawcett heard him read it; nothing, however, could well be more effective than his own Blinval.

On the 30th of July, Prince Hoare fitted up another drama of Kotzebue's, called *Sighs!* or the Daughter. But he introduced a sort of *Cocker* in the person of *Totum*, calculated to exhibit the peculiar humour of Fawcett—and sent on him and Mrs. Gibbs with an epilogue, written by himself it appeared, but that every body must have attributed to Colman, in which *numbers* were very pleasantly sported with from the *deuce* to the audience.

Holman, too, admiring strongly the *Robbers* of Schiller, produced an alteration under the title of the Redcross Knights, which came out on the 21st of August, and ran through the rest of the season. The little manager at the close, complained of the *growing* curtailment of his period, but he had encouragement from the public, and what he lost as a manager by the winter potentates, he contrived, as we have seen, to get back as an author.

The youngest daughter of their Majesties, the Princess Amelia, being recovered from a dangerous illness, her illustrious sister, the Princess Elizabeth, on the 7th of August, at Frogmore, planned an entertainment to the nobility on the occasion, and Mr. Wyatt was at hand to execute the design of her Royal Highness. The building was in the shape of a barn, and had three arched roofs or divisions supported by two rows of pillars. The middle space was allotted to the

dancers; the sides to the company: all the effect was rustic. The chandeliers wore, in form, bee-hives, crowned with wheat —the pillars were only the supporters of artificial flowers— and the very lamps were united by ropes of wheat interlacing blue-bells, violets, and lilies of the valley. The very chairs for the company were cottage furniture.

When a royal mind, accustomed to painted halls and gilded roofs, turns its fancy to some exquisite enjoyment, the scene of it we find is in a *cottage*, or a *barn*, and a *rush* chair is the greatest personal indulgence. Upon a variety of occasions an attentive observer will recollect an external sympathy of nature with remarkable events—all antiquity is uniform as to such singular accompaniments. This day of festivity was remarked for a deluge of rain that came down incessantly. The lovely OBJECT of the entertainment was not destined long to survive; and some circumstances attending her dissolution pressed so poignantly upon her venerable father, that a long night of reason succeeded and attended him to the grave.

In looking over my papers, as to what associates the above fête with theatrical history, I find that Quick, Mrs. Mattocks, and Elliston, were professionally employed—that Mrs. Mattocks screamed out Falstaff, and Mr. Elliston in the character of Merlin (him of *Hanover* Square?) was, poor man, doomed to deliver some lines of superlative dulness, written with the best intention by a "*person of honour.*" The Princess Amelia was thus saluted

> "And thou, *sweet* maid, permit ME THEE to *greet.*"

But the Princess of Orange came in for the choicest sweets of the muse.

> "Thou, too, my *greetings shar'st*, respected Dame!
> Soon shall BATAVIA'S *land* thy presence claim."

The reader sees how happily on such occasions we had now forgotten HIM, who equalled Shakspeare in the *Masque of Queens;* and taught the lyric strain to Milton in the *Vision of Delight*, and a long succession of learned and elegant inventions, by which he charmed, and generally *employed*, the courts of James and Charles.

CHAP. XIII.

Season of 1799–1800.—*More Decorations.—Management.—Turnpike Gate.—The Wise Man of the East.—The East Indian—Mr. Kemble acts in it.—Other novelties.—Modern drama founded on moral paradox.—Fatal Tendency.—Speed the Plough.—Miss Baillie.—De Montfort.—Mr. Kemble.—Prince Hoare.—Seduction.—Liberal Opinions.—Attempt upon the King's life—Described.—His majesty's firmness.—The Assassin—His trial—Considerations.—Death of George Steevens.—Character of him by Hayley.—Sketch of him by the author.—Colman's.*

On the 16th of September, Covent Garden Theatre opened for the season of 1799–1800, and Drury Lane on the day following. The former house again boasted of its *decorations;* but I really am heart-sick of this most childish folly, now grown into a ruinous evil. Cumberland wrote an address spoken by Pope, which must have astonished the audience. He told them that *their* triumphs had spread from the Texel to the Nile—that from Syria their career advanced, and stretched still onward from the spicy shore of Ceylon to the citadel of rich Mysore. He told them, moreover, that *their* taste was to point the genius of the stage; and the actor added—

> "We are your servants—and it is agreed,
> Servants should *follow*—Masters should *precede*."

Mischievous nonsense! the usual falsehood of those who debauch the public taste. We are your servants! To be sure. So was Shakspeare; but to *lead,* not follow, the people into rational and dignified amusements.

Reynolds, on the last of October, brought out his comedy, called *Management.* Professional habits cling to a man. In going slightly, of course, over this author's fables, it is amusing to see the eternal recurrence of *bill, bond,* and *will,*—the plaintiff, the bailiff, and the gaol. We have another of his *widows,* and a bad specimen of the order.—Mrs. Dazzle has a reversion of one hundred thousand pounds, if Juliana marries. As she is devoted to Lavish, a young spendthrift, the widow

measures the young lady's purity by her own, and imagines that she will not, by the *church's aid*, divest herself of her fortune. She therefore agrees to wave her own claim for an annuity of 200*l.* per annum, and so removes the only bar to their legal union.

Lavish, a captain by the by, is a character written for Lewis, and frequently found in life, who, unable to resist a present temptation to expense, indulges the whim, if he is to save it a *thousand ways;* these disproportioned outlays to be compensated by petty self-denials, are among the delusions of fancy, and heralds of disaster. It was as moral in its tendency, as entertaining in its progress.

The comedy was finely acted, and stood its ground, in defiance of the German genius, that *mental* COMET, as Taylor well called it in his prologue, which had darted upon us from a distant sphere. He was fortunate also in an epilogue by Colman, spoken by Fawcett, as a manager of a country theatre, sold off to various buyers.

> "A sturdy farmer bought the *walls*—why then,
> What was a barn, will be a *barn* again,
> Corn on the stage, not mummers will be seen;
> And oats be *thresh'd* where ACTORS should have been."

Knight, the actor, a man of talent, by the opera of the Turnpike Gate, increased his value greatly with the manager. His own *Maythorn* was beautiful acting—and Munden valued himself always highly upon the performance of *Crack*, in the Turnpike Gate.

At Drury Lane, Linley, under the title of the *Pavilion*, tried an Arabian Night's entertainment, but it did not suit the climate.

We had been indebted to Kotzebue, in the summer, for *Family Distress*. The *Wise Man of the East* changes the sex of the victim. The *infamy* which constitutes the fable of this play is a nonpareil in depravity—a heartless invention of the German muse, and a libel upon our nature.

Ellen Metland, from the distresses of her parents, becomes dependent upon Lady Diamond. Her ladyship has planned the ruin of young Clarenceforth, and Ellen flies to save him, by possessing him of the plan and some of the means. In making this discovery she in course loses her patroness, and therefore begs him to procure a coach for her, and send her to her friends. The *gratitude* of this monster leads him to lodge her in a brothel, for the purposes of seduction. Ellen effects her escape, passes the night under a shed, and in the morning implores the other jewel, Lady Diamond, not to acquaint her family with

the step she had taken. That virtuous lady had however been already with them, and turned her virtue into pitch, to punish her honesty. Ellen throws herself into the Thames, and the Humane Society restore her, as in the summer they did Mr. Maxwell, by their agent, the wise man of the East, Ava Thoanoa, who turns out to be the father of Young *Hopeful:* the son repents his errors, (ERRORS!) and instead of being hanged, is rewarded with a virtuous woman.

And this is comedy! and these are human beings!

Covent Garden Theatre being thus provided happily, on the 30th of November, with an entertainment as moral as its *piazzas*, Mr. Lewis, on the 7th of December, supplied the rival house, in the regular way, with a stock of equal value, called the *East Indian*. I say in the *regular* way; because I believe Mrs. Jordan and Mrs. Powell had each of them been *benefitted* by the lesson at the close of the last season.

Dorimont, a married man, of the most exalted sentiments, abuses the friendship, the confidence, the hospitality of Mortimer, and debauches his daughter. The young lady, a person of infinite merits, and the delight of a fond and virtuous father, elopes from him to live as the mistress of her seducer, and devote her parent to agonies unutterable. The guilty are victims of remorse, as they deserve to be; but time operates in their favour, which they did *not* merit; and by removing the wife seasonably, enables Mr. Dorimont to marry his mistress.

Mr. Kemble did Mr. Lewis the honour to act the father, Mortimer, in this play. The scene in which he is by accident led to the abode of his daughter—the scene of *her* contrition and *his* forgiveness, he acted in a manner so exquisitely tender, he touched the parental character with such powerful truth, as to bear the play triumphant through the moral assault which it had provoked. Miss Biggs, in Zorayda, showed herself worthy to act with him.

Mr. Cumberland had now procured an unpublished romance, by the fashionable German; however he took the credit of re-writing it entirely. It was called Joanna, and Busby composed music for it. As it was a spectacle of lavish expense, and not at all a favourite, Kotzebue thought it worth his while publicly to disclaim every thing in it that was *offensive*. It was produced on the 16th of January, 1800.

Mr. Pye, as a scholar and a critic, had every claim to Mr. Kemble's aid. Accordingly he acted *Richard* for him, in a tragedy called Adelaide, the name of the heroine sustained by Mrs. Siddons. There were two powerful scenes; one in which Adelaide vindicates herself to Richard from the villanous aspersions of his brother John; another wherein Richard, to the

legate of the pope, unfolds the storm of reason and policy, that would one day snatch mankind from the tyranny of imposture and unholy ambition. The play exhibited a powerful struggle with intractable materials.

The reader, who has done me the honour to attend to my brief illustrations of the MODERN DRAMAS, will have remarked with surprise, and I hope with disgust, that they were most of them built upon moral paradox. He will remember to have heard from those same venerable men, who stood in the relation to him of parent, whether of the person or the mind, that *all* VICE had a contagious influence; that any *single* enormity, long indulged, from the natural operation of our self love, begot a specious sanction that satisfied the conscience; and by the extension of similar palliation to kindred crimes, the whole mind became irrecoverably tainted, and the BEING obnoxious and to be avoided. The *German* secret of interest tended to strengthen the self-delusion in actual life; it laid the "flattering unction to the soul," that any one vice might maintain its power in the most amiable minds; and exhibited the *adultress* and the *seducer*, and the *robber*, and even the *murderer*, as the most generous of the species. The sort of thing became popular, from the *passion* it set in motion, as well as the balm it infused into the festering wounds of memory. The *most* guarded had some imperfections, which they would fain hope to be venial; they were now systematically taught, that even GOODNESS might consist with errors far more criminal than their own. Thus sympathy usurped the place of censure, and a door was opened to that fatal fallacy, of making a *compromise* with morals, and setting the vices to which we were *not* inclined, as a sort of balance to those in which we were determined to indulge.

I have already expressed my opinion of the talent of Morton. He saw the strong leaning of the public taste, and in *Speed the Plough*, without the sacrifice of any principle, constructed an interest of deep pathos, and sufficiently romantic. Sir P. Blandford, on the eve of marriage, finds his mistress in the embraces of his own brother. He stabs him upon the spot. The intended bride subsequently bears a son, the fruit of that disastrous connexion. By a more propitious union Sir Philip has a daughter, whom accident leads into an attachment to her unknown cousin. The brother, recovered from the effect of his wound, secretly watches over the excesses of Sir Philip—at length discloses himself to that victim of remorse, and their children are permitted to unite their hands.

Morton was fond of agricultural improvements, and had a taste for ingenious machinery. The *abuse* of such pursuits suggested to him the *Handy* family, and they became in his

hands a source of fine comic satire. His love of the country brought him acquainted with farmer Ashfield and *his* family. Of these materials he composed a comedy, of which the town was extremely fond—a play admirably acted in all its parts; and so powerful as to support every company of comedians who have performed it. The first night of *Speed the Plough* was the 8th of February, 1800.

Miss Joanna Baillie, a rather metaphysical dramatist, had published a series of plays upon the passions. If she executed her design, each play was to be in fact the *history* of some one passion; its rise, its progress, its gratification, which in tragedy, of course, was its extinction in the death of the person whose bosom it had usurped.

A very admirable critic showed at the time with great felicity, the delusion as to the *moral effect* of such a play, and the absurd *narrowness* of its plan, as precluding from so many sources of pleasure, and auxiliaries of the greatest importance.

Mr. Kemble, however, had been struck with *De Montfort*, which I then read by his desire, and he told me of his intention to make some alterations to bring it better within the scope of stage representation, and to act the character himself, consigning his noble sister to the care of Mrs. Siddons.

In pursuance of the modern creed, which I am at all times ready to combat, De Montfort is a most excellent being, cherishing through life an unappeasable hatred against *Rezenvelt*; whose pleasantry had, in their boyhood, annoyed him, and whose free castigation inflicted, in his progress through life, many a wound upon a mind suffering constantly from apprehension. His hatred at one time produces a duel. Rezenvelt is there also his master. Lady Jane, the sister of De Montfort, becomes an object of admiration to Rezenvelt, and this embroils her admirer again with her brother: however, she commands with much dignity a reconciliation between them, and "speaks of peace, where there is no peace." De Montfort, hearing that Rezenvelt is to pass through a neighbouring forest, after one of the usual combats between honour and hatred, lies in wait for him in the track, and barbarously murders him. The groans of the dying man alarm a neighbouring convent; the assassin is secured, to die of remorse in all the hells of guilt.

This is all of the story that need be told. I presume the greater part of mankind feel an involuntary scepticism as to the character itself. I remember it was corroborated by the story of a bedridden victim to the gout, who, having afforded hospitality to a schoolfellow whom he had hated, crawled out of his bed-room in the night time, and finding his guest asleep, cut his throat, and then retreated to his own chamber, with horrible

satisfaction. The cause assigned was a generous suggestion of his school-fellow, for which he ought to have adored him, "that they should take at school a punishment upon themselves, which two poorer boys had actually merited."

But it must be sufficiently obvious that these instances, to use the language of the catalogue, are of "*rare occurrence.*" The lesson is therefore too limited in its application for general purposes; and the passion too disgusting to be endured in all its *singleness*, and without any of the palliations, which render other passions objects of respect or pity even in their excesses.

But though I must venture these objections to the plan and conduct of De Montfort, I yet feel the highest respect for the mind capable of such exemplifications of human nature in its debasement, and admire the nervous direction in which the author displays here very *original* conceptions.

The acting of Mr. Kemble was amazingly powerful; and he showed how well he could conceive and display the features of a passion, from which he was *personally* more free than most men of his time. He was, as I well know, (for some of the records remain under his own hand,) a most unsparing censor of his own failings; an indulgent and benevolent extenuator of those in other men. At all the vulgar persecution which barked about him in his career, he seldom deigned to be angry; and never, as he might have done, silenced it by authority which he could have employed, or attentions which were unmerited.

Every care was taken in the decoration of De Montfort. Capon painted a very unusual pile of scenery, representing a church of the 14th century with its nave, choir, and side aisles, magnificently decorated, consisting of seven planes in succession. In width this extraordinary elevation was about 56 feet, 52 in depth, and 37 feet in height. It was positively a building.

The play, however, was found to be heavy, and on the whole unpleasing, and could only be kept alive eleven nights. Yet Mrs. Siddons exerted herself powerfully in the Countess Jane; and the Hon. F. North wrote a prologue to recommend it, and the Duchess of Devonshire an epilogue to enforce the doctrines of its ingenious author.

Comedy, at both theatres, trod in its accustomed steps. *Seduction* supplied Prince Hoare a field for the display of the golden medium, which it seems puts all these domestic concerns in the happiest train imaginable—

First,—Parents, do not be *too* rigorous on the subject of your children's affections.

Secondly,—Children; never think of running from the paternal roof with the *first villain* that asks you.

Here was a family oddly enough named Burleigh; and the old gentleman of the name, in the course of the piece, assumes the disguise of an old woman. He discovers, in his disguise, that his daughter is innocent, though she had been a fugitive, and is reconciled to her, and to her union with Clermont. The reader sees that the desire to have Bannister burst like a fury out of his old woman's garb, and offer to fight the whole company, takes every thing like dignity from the serious interest; and the comic incident, of Maxim seeking a wife through the newspapers, though highly diverting, forms no costrast; for nothing in the ludicrous can exceed the *pere de famille*, Burleigh himself. But King and Bannister, with Jordan, Pope and Biggs, could not fail to be entertaining; and though this author's comedies were never equal to his farces, yet a mind fertile in whimsical inventions could not but afford abundance of amusement in five acts.

Dibdin's *Liberal Opinions* was also an amusing production, nearly allied to farce. The progress of refinement produces the gradual encroachment of the ranks of life upon each other. The necessaries of existence, easily obtained, are exchanged for the luxuries. An idle competition for the unessential involves society in debt. The stage echoes the complaints of the real world, and our comedies now teemed with all the frauds by which the needy would become wealthy, and everlasting DEBT bolted upon you in the train of the comic muse. In the present play, *debt* is the great hinge of the interest. Bailiffs are flying about in all directions, and ten thousand pounds are ript from the lining of an old drab coat. The liberals are all happily disposed of in marriage; and, a thing of infinitely more difficulty, the Jew *resigns* the ten thousand pounds found in the lining of the drab coat. The name of this unhappy person is Ephraim; but, I suppose, prayers were immediately put up in the synagogue for his recovery from so unaccountable a lunacy.

The levity of the preceding paragraph was the natural result of a mind at ease, inclining to the various course of the narrative, and exhibiting, from day to day, the transactions, whether serious or comic, of the theatres of London. But I am now to speak of an event so horrible in its nature, so surprising in all its circumstances, so perfectly without a motive, and yet so transcendent in its mischief, that I need these few lines of preparation to assume the proper tone for a detail so unparalleled. On the 15th day of May, 1800, the late amiable sovereign, George the III. upon his entrance into the royal box at Drury Lane Theatre, was fired at, by a frantic miscreant in the pit, with a pistol loaded with two slugs. And on the same day, His Majesty, in the morning, attending the field exercises of the

grenadier battalion of the Guards in Hyde Parke, a gentleman named Ongley, standing in the direction, and not twenty yards from the royal person, was shot by a ball fired from the musket of some soldier in the ranks unknown. I put the two events together, because, in all probability, they were instantly associated in the royal mind; and His Majesty must have conceived, that some assassins that day were taking *every* means to destroy him. The King, upon hearing the report of the pistol, stood *firm*, at about four paces in advance from the door of the box; but amid the alarm and horror, and the thousand voices that called to *seize the assassin*, with the self-possession that became a sovereign, perhaps expecting to have a second shot fired in the tumult from some other quarter, His Majesty calmly advanced to the *very front of the box*, where he remained, as such a man only could be, perfectly undismayed. Upon seeing the Queen enter, he at first with his hand waved her back, but upon her enquiring what was the matter, the King considerately replied, "Only a *squib!* they have been *firing squibs*." After the assassin, across the orchestra, had been taken out of the pit, the Queen, in great agitation, came forward and curtsied, and asked His Majesty, "whether they should stay?" His answer was, "WE WILL NOT STIR; we will *stay* the WHOLE of the ENTERTAINMENTS."

The Princesses in their alarm fainted, except the Princess Elizabeth, whose more powerful nerves enabled her to assist in their recovery. The *heroism* of their Sovereign, and his escape, exalted the joy of the people to rapture, and it was with no common feelings, that the national anthem was delivered;—GOD had indeed that day *saved the King*.

James Hadfield, the assassin, was about 29 years of age, had served on the Continent under H. R. H. the Duke of York, who remembered him in the 15th Dragoons, and one of his orderlies. On the 26th of the following month, this man's trial for high treason took place, before Lord Kenyon; it was what is termed a trial at bar in the court of King's Bench. Mr. Erskine was assigned to him for counsel; and whether with respect to his stating the law upon the case, or his elucidations of mental aberration, his speech was among the most interesting efforts of his powerful talent. When he called his witnesses, such a stream of facts, that could not have been coloured for the purpose, flowed in full conviction of the prisoner's *insanity*, that, by Lord Kenyon's direction, and Mr. Attorney General's entire concurrence, the Jury, without retiring, recorded a verdict *Not guilty*. He was of course taken proper care of for his life.

The dreadful wounds which he had received in the service had injured the brain, and produced, at various times, very

alarming results. When not in the paroxysm of his disorder, the man was gentle, kind, and industrious, but he had tried to bayonet the preserver of his life in 1796, and attempted to murder his infant child but two days before his attack upon the person of the King. Yet of his child he was dotingly fond, and he never mentioned His Majesty without blessings, because it was from his bounty he derived his *pension.*

I wish to make but one reflection upon this business, and I could have desired it to come with all the authority of the seat of Justice. It is this: that when the relatives of persons acting in the manner of Hadfield, pass over the ravings or the violences of their lunacy, satisfied with an interval of calmness, a glimpse of returning reason, and allow such unhappy beings to be the actual masters of their conduct, they incur a fearful responsibility indeed before God and man. It is not a matter for *their* speculation or indulgence—they are bound to ask the judgment and the aid of a branch of the profession of the highest importance in society, and whose studies lie in that region of our structure, which, all of it "fearfully and wonderfully made," is there more peculiarly *wonderful* and to be *feared.*

It is hardly of consequence to enquire the motive that frenzy assigns for an act so atrocious; but Hadfield was possessed with an opinion, that it was proper he himself should die. Suicide, as he conceived, would rob him of decent burial; he therefore, without intending the death of the King, fired into his box, knowing that the deliberate attempt *alone* was sufficient to bring about that death, which he persuaded himself was necessary to society. Before the exact state of the man could be known, (for the *Attorney General* did not know it even upon the trial,) the King, as I heard, entertained some notions of systematic violence; because he said, "If with my family I cannot enjoy my amusements in the midst of my people, let them take my *life*, for existence is not worth holding upon such conditions."

Sheridan and Richardson were both dreadfully annoyed by this miserable business. The royal favour had for a long time rather inclined to the rival theatre. Mr. Sheridan, upon some late occasions, showed, that he knew how to drop the language of PARTY upon any grand and *vital* question. The King had applauded his ENGLISH feeling on the subject of invasion; and now they apprehended such an outrage would beget a distaste to the place where it was perpetrated, and Drury Lane once more become a stranger to the royal presence. But the *condition* of the maniac dispelled every doubt; and, however untrue the position, (for FACTION seldom rages without the *murderer* in her train,) it was best to have it thought, that the blameless life of the Sovereign secured him, as reasonably it ought to have

done, from even the *possibility* of a personal enemy. It is well for government to hold such language, but it would be criminal indeed to act upon the presumption that it was true. Forty years' experience have at least settled my own conviction upon this subject.

The reader would be little likely to excuse me, if I omitted to notice during the theatrical season, the death of a gentleman to whom all English stages are under eternal obligation. George Steevens, the editor of Shakspeare, died on the 22d January, 1800, at his house on Hampstead Heath, in the 64th year of his age. Of his knowledge as an antiquarian, a critic, and a scholar, he has left his brief but expressive compositions, to speak for him, on pages from which they *cannot* be removed. I have already spoken, with the feeling which it excited, of a very unnecessary publication by Mr. Hayley, rendered even malicious, when it is considered, that in a place where there should enter nothing but the spirit of TRUTH, he had himself exhibited the following verses as the character of Mr. Steevens. I make not the least apology for their insertion in this place; they *do* proudly keep one over his grave, and are inimitable for nicety of discrimination, and, as I think, perfect resemblance.

"Peace to these ashes! once the bright attire
Of Steevens, sparkling with ethereal fire!
Whose talents, varying as the diamond's ray,
Could fascinate alike the grave or gay.

"How oft has pleasure in the social hour
Smil'd at his wit's exhilarating power!
And truth attested, with delight intense,
The serious charms of his colloquial sense!
His genius, that to wild luxuriance swell'd
His large, yet latent, charity excell'd:
Want with such true beneficence he cheer'd,
All that his bounty gave his zeal endear'd.

"Learning, as vast as mental power could seize,
In sport displaying, and with graceful ease,
Lightly the stage of checker'd life he trod,
Careless of chance, confiding in his God!

"This tomb may perish, but not so his name
Who shed new lustre upon Shakspeare's fame!"

A few venial errors "set off his head," I affirm the above to be a just record of George Steevens. Yet this gentleman has been assailed with a perfect wantonness of abuse, and his censurers have forgotten the sanctuary afforded by the grave, to errors infinitely greater than his. The elements were in truth very strangely mingled in him. You heard frequently of sportive mischief, that provoked your anger and your laughter: you also

heard of munificence, of tenderness and charity, that made the bosom swell, and filled the eyes with tears.

For several successive years, I used to converse with Mr. Steevens, frequently three times during the week, and enjoyed, with very dear friends, his wisdom and his wit. He appeared to me to have made his morning walk from Hampstead, an equal exercise to his fancy and his frame; and many of the pleasantries with which he daily amused the town, were, no doubt, among the reveries of this "*solitary walker.*"

It was assuredly no slight misfortune to come under the lash of George Steevens; for he had so sure a tact in seizing upon the ludicrous points of a vain, a weak, or a false character, and his exhibitions were so neat and peculiar, and given in terms so provokingly apt, and so sure to be remembered, that a dozen words might have the effect of rendering their object, at least for *years*, ridiculous. He had not, perhaps, taken the most favourable view of our mixed and imperfect nature, and commonly received with *suspicion* the attentions which were paid to him from sincere regard. So absolutely had this feeling worked itself into a habit, that when, in the dangerous illness before his last, I walked out to Hampstead to see him, he asked with earnestness, "whether I had really taken the trouble for that *sole* object." And upon my assuring him that such was positively the fact, the peculiar *glance of distrust* vanished from his countenance, and he became, though then far from well, as animated, as cordial, and even *more* communicative, than I had ever known him to be.

I remember that, while we were enjoying the fine air from the heath together, he gave me a very interesting topography of his neighbourhood. The house he lived in had been one of public entertainment, known by the title, perhaps sign, of the *Upper Flask;* to which Addison and Steele, a century back, had resorted, and where, if the subjects of the *Tatlers* and *Spectators* were not conceived, the minds were certainly invigorated which produced that unparalleled series of periodical essays.

A doubt was once started, however remarkable, whether Mr. Steevens, though he had chosen Shakspeare as the basis of his literary fame, had a sound and *hearted* preference for his genius. His opinion as to the character of *Hamlet*, that as to his *Sonnets*, replete as they are with the *very* language of his plays, and a variety of *notes* not very respectfully couched, will be adduced by those who advocate such a suspicion. The taste of Mr. Steevens may be reasonably deduced from his composition; and *that* is invariably marked by sarcasm and point. His genius led him to satire and to epigram. I am not likely to forget the

peculiar animation with which he this day expatiated as to the powers of Dryden. "Were I," said he, "a young man, I would begin the study of English versification in the rhymed plays of Dryden." As I suppose I expressed some surprise at this singular declaration, he asked, "Where in the whole compass of our literature I could find any thing superior to the following passage in the second part of the Conquest of Grenada?" He then, from memory, recited in his silver voice, and giving the full harmony of every line, the satirical exclamation of Lyndaraxa, in the second scene of the third act.

> "O, how unequally in me were join'd
> A creeping fortune, with a soaring mind!
> O lottery of fate! where still the wise
> Draw blanks of fortune, and the fools the prize!
> These cross, ill-shuffl'd lots from Heav'n are sent;
> Yet dull Religion teaches us content.
> But when we ask it where that blessing dwells,
> It points to pedant colleges and cells;
> There shows it rude, and in a homely dress,
> And that *proud* WANT mistakes for happiness."

Mr. Kemble, upon my quoting it to him, said it was a noble specimen of the peculiar force of Dryden. But as I am not going, at least on this occasion, to give a full detail of my observation of Mr. Steevens, I here take leave of a character too various to be easily drawn, too important to be slightly handled; at once a lesson and a problem.

I may, however, indulge a wish, that he should retain the proud distinction of being, perhaps, the *best* editor of Shakspeare; and that, differing *toto cœlo* as they did on many points, Mr. Steevens should not entirely merge into Mr. Malone; and, if the practice continue, at last sink, in the accumulating stream of illustration by which the margin of Shakspeare is in danger to be overflowed. I could really desire to be permitted to replace him in the modest limits of his own FIFTEEN volumes; with a few improvements as to disposition merely; and the very slender accession indeed of *certain* amendments of the text, and explanations which, on the whole, appear to be more felicitous even than his own.

The Haymarket Theatre was now, in its turn, to be given up to the foul fiend. Accordingly, on the 2d of July, the pantomimical drama of Obi, or Three-fingered Jack, the maimed hero, *Proh pudor!* by that elegant actor, Charles Kemble, was performed before a most crowded, brilliant, and *judicious* audience. The additions thus made to the vulgar tongue were of great value. We became acquainted with the Obi woman, with Tuckey, and Jenkannoo, Quashee and Quashee's wife; and the

region of Foote and the Colmans was shifted into that of Sadler's Wells, or Astley's, or the Circus.

But on the 16th Charles Kemble redeemed the credit of the theatre, by his very clever play called the *Point of Honour*, which was in the first place extremely interesting, and in the second, exceedingly well acted, by *himself* as well as others. It was a maiden production.

The manager of this theatre now assumed, I have no sort of doubt with the royal sanction, the names of Arthur Griffenhoofe, Jun. which, if my friend, Sir George Naylor, can examine for laughter, he may probably find duly enregistered in the College of Arms;—if he do not prefer seeing and enjoying the *Review*, or the Wags of Windsor; for which he need not wait long, while Caleb Fawcett, I beg his pardon, Quotem, is in existence. For John Lump, it is with sincere regret that I announce, from alarming symptoms of late, my despair of the *perfect recovery* of that Yorkshire Bumpkin.

CHAP. XIV.

Season of 1800-1801.—*Kemble desirous to purchase, reassumes the management.—Mrs. Montagu.—Kemble's remark.—That lady's wisdom.—Dr. Moncey.—Marbles.—Condescension.—Cato in Lybia.—The soldiers.—Blanchard.—Mrs. S. Kemble.—Virginia.—George Cooke at Covent Garden.—Characterised.—His Richard criticised.—Compared with Kemble.—Life, by Reynolds.—Antonio fails.—Cooke's Kitely.—Mr. Kemble's Lear.—Letters.—King John.—Poor Gentleman.—Cymbeline.—Deaf and Dumb.—La Perouse.—Cooke's Sir Giles.—Adelmorn.—Cooke's conduct.*

The winter season of 1800-1801 commenced about the usual time; Drury Lane Theatre once more under the management of Mr. Kemble. He returned to this unthankful office with some idea of still closer connexion with that house. Sheridan had thrown out hints that upon a proper consideration, he should be willing to dispose of a part of the property, and Mr. Kemble conceived that if he were himself in possession of a FOURTH of the concern, and by the steady assertion of a right, could restrain Mr. Sheridan from his intromissions, or, perhaps, buy him out altogether, the theatre might flourish once more under him, as it had done under Mr. Garrick, and his career close, as he wished it to do, by his being patentee of Drury Lane play-house.

Should the reader feel astonishment at the *improvidence* of his entering into such a scene of pitiful disgraces and endless embarrassments, I then tell him from Mr. Kemble's own mouth, "that the theatre, *fairly treated*, was a profitable concern; this was a fact," he said, "about which he could not be mistaken, as all the accounts during his former management had in course been inspected by him, and were accurately known to him." But he was sensible of the necessity of a very entire reform; and as he was always an object of real or feigned dread to the whole generation of fattening reptiles about such a concern, so his return to the management was attended by the usual obsequiousness and the usual hy-

pocrisy. But it was not new to him. Horace touches the state of things, within and without the walls of Drury, to the syllable.

> "Seditione, dolis, scelere, atque libidine, et ira,
> Iliacos intra muros peccatur, et extra."
> *Epist ad Lollium*, v. 15.

Mr. Kemble, as well from prudence as taste, opened with Hamlet. The beginning of a season is rather thinly attended, but Shakspeare's attraction is always superior to any other: besides, it was cause and consequence closely united —in the management of your greatest *actor* you will enjoy your greatest *poet*.

Shakspeare had just lost his illustrious pupil, his most eloquent defender, Mrs. Montagu, at an advanced age. She died on the 25th of August, 1800. The preparation of her mind was excellent; and the great author of the *Life of Cicero*[*] assisted in her education. Of her book upon Shakspeare, without expecting the praise of commentators, it may be fame enough to ask, where is there such *another?* Her house was the resort of the learned and the tasteful, and her charities were more ornamental to Portman Square than her abode, elegant as it was, and still remains. As Mr. Kemble passed the front of it with me, he pointed to the newly placed hatchment, and exclaimed in a subdued tone—

"There's a GREAT SPIRIT gone!"

But the reader shall not take this upon even *his* word, and yet it was one that never *faltered* with the TRUTH. I will place before him a part of her counsel to a learned, but eccentric physician of sixty-five, who talked to her of retirement from active life. Remark the dignity of tone—the *male* power of expression.

"I much approve of the style and temper of your last letter, as far as it inclines to that *decent* share of retirement and meditation, which becomes the age of sixty-five. But, as in a gay and dissipated life, the faults and levities of YOUTH would continue longest upon you, have a care those of AGE do not advance faster in your retreat. It is the great misfortune of man never to be without enemies. The passions in his own breast are the most dangerous he has. No bolt or bar can exclude them. In the silence of the night they

[*] Dr. Convers Middleton.

are heard; they invade every solitude, however deep. When the gay illusions of the world spread no longer their temptations to our fancy, there may arise spirits of great power and influence to haunt our dark retreats. Pride, discontent, suspicion, selfishness, and the whole train of unsocial passions, like the spectres of the night, stalk about us.

"We had better entertain *idle affecti ns* than MALIGNANT PASSIONS. If you retire, from an opinion that mankind are insincere, ungrateful, and malignant, you will grow PROUD, by reflecting, that YOU are not *like* these Pharisees. We should retire, from a sense of our own faults, with a desire to correct them, and have leisure for self-examination. This is the spirit of Christian philosophy. By frequently considering our own errors, we lose the bitterness we should perhaps express when we perceive the vices of others. If you find you grow *more indulgent* to your fellow-creatures in your retirement, be assured you have spent your time VERY PROFITABLY. I should have a higher opinion of the uses of retirement, if I saw it produce the fruits—of BENEVOLENCE, of HUMILITY, of CHARITY.

* * * *

"In your retired hours, think much of your *own* state in respect to God and the world; as little as you can of the conduct of others towards YOU. Do not harden your heart against mankind by too intense meditation on their vices and follies. Consider them as you do your patients; administer to their infirmities: give to *some* advice, and to ALL a good example."

The letter, from which the above is extracted, was written in the year 1762, to Dr. Moncey, of Chelsea. Her portrait, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, was not long since exhibited in Pall Mall. I regarded it with veneration, for it was absolute identity. An exquisite profile of her, when young, shows that she was then as beautiful as she was wise.

From Portman Square, Mr. Kemble and I continued our walk, till we came to Park Lane, where he saw some chimney-sweeps playing at marbles. "Poor fellows," said he, "they have lost their patroness!" then going up to them—"Do you know, Beaden, that I think TAW the best thing I *play?*" I laughed, I believe at the fancy: but he suddenly called out, as he had done when a boy, "*Fain dribbling,*" and taking up a marble that lay at the greatest distance from the ring, he knuckled down, and in the real and true style struck out of it the marble he aimed at. He rose in the greatest glee to find he had lost no skill in this early accomplishment, and dropping a *shilling* into the ring, in the *name* of Mrs. Montagu, passed on.

They who love the *light* parts of a SOLID CHARACTER, will not disdain this whim of my great friend. They who are obliged to keep a *rigid stateliness* in their OWN movements, will think this condescension of Cato ought to have been spared.

This peculiarity of doing a whimsical thing with the most Cervantic gravity, displayed itself on another occasion in the lobby of the theatre while he was manager. I had been dining with him and Mrs. Kemble, and in the evening we walked down to the house, as was his custom, to give his ultimate instructions for the night. As we entered the hall of the theatre, about a dozen soldiers were standing on each side of the fireplace, who had, perhaps, carried him off the stage, as Alexander, upon their shields. Upon seeing their leader, they all took off their hats to him, and stood *firmly* as a soldier is taught to do. Kemble turned himself suddenly round to me, and said, "If you have a guinea about you, give it to me." He but seldom, I think, took much money out with him, and NEVER carried it *long*. I gave him what he wanted, and then, with a *wink*, that led me to observe him, he gravely advanced to the soldiers, and thus addressed them :

"Soldiers! when Cato led his army across the burning deserts of Lybia, he found himself parched up with drowth; in plainer words he was *very dry*. One of the soldiers stepped out on this, unperceived, and brought him presently some water in his steel cap. What do you think Cato said to the soldier? I'll tell you. 'Comrade,' said he, 'drink *first* YOURSELF.' Now, I dare say, Cato never in his life led braver men than I at present see before me; therefore, to follow so great an example, do YOU drink *that* for ME." And he put the guinea into the hands of a non-commissioned officer. The manly troop sent after him a "God bless your honour!" and we went on to his dressing-room. "Boaden," said he, "I doubt I am not quite right in my story, but the BEER will help our friends to *swallow* it." He repaid me the loan very pleasantly, for he added to it, I remember, ONE HUNDRED pounds, that, some how or other, he had gotten for me from the treasurer. To resume the regular course of my narrative.

On the 27th of September, Mrs. Siddons opened *her* season, with the character of Isabella, and Mr. Kemble acted Biron in his usual interesting manner. A long tried and very useful servant of the public, Mr. Blanchard, on the 1st of October, made his *debut* in town, at Covent Garden, in *Acres*, in Sheridan's Rivals, and *Crack*, in Knight's Turnpike Gate. He was then, and is still, fitter for the latter style of character than the former. I was going to say with

Hamlet, "that millions of Acres" would hardly weigh against the FEE SIMPLE of Dodd, in the land of Folly.

Mrs. Stephen Kemble being in town on a visit to Mrs. Siddons, Mr. Kemble asked her for a single night, to act *Ophelia* to his Hamlet. She followed it by a *Cowslip* of artless nature, and in both characters showed the town what they lost, by her unavoidable residence in the north.

Mrs. Plowden, a fashionable lady, the wife I believe, of the author of Jura Anglorum, had fancied herself strong enough for dramatic composition, and an opera by her, called *Virginia*, was acted at Drury Lane on the 30th of October; it was not bearable in any one scene, and could not be given out by all the efforts of John Bannister. Mr. Kemble came forward, and very emphatically impressed his *management* upon the public ear; for thus he addressed the audience. "The respect, ladies and gentlemen, that I have always shown to your opinion, whenever I have had the honour of conducting the public amusements of this theatre, leads me to regret that it should be adverse to this piece. I must naturally feel interested in the success of every dramatic work that is presented at this theatre; but at the same time I most sensibly feel the deference which is due to your decision." He then withdrew the fair author and her opera, and announced that everlasting stop-gap at Drury, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*.

The 31st of October was an era in stage history. Mr. Harris, in the person of the celebrated George Cooke, obtained an actor, who in some characters of tragedy was thought by the crowd even superior to Kemble. But it was not only by the million that he was so esteemed; there were men of considerable intelligence who joined in this decision. Mr. Cooke made his first appearance in the character of Richard III. In his expression he was sarcastic; in his figure, manly: in his gait and the motion of his arms awkward, but impressive. The singularity of his utterance was, that he spoke with two voices, one of which was harsh and acrimonious, the other mild and caressing. The great secret of his *effect* in speaking, was a rapid transition from one of these sounds to the other: He used the first either to control or convince—the second to sooth or betray.

When I first saw Cooke, his fin-like arms moving like a tortoise, and heard for half an hour his *rage* and his *cunning*, I confess I thought he might be given up to the pencil of *Stephano* in the Tempest.

Ste "Four legs and two voices; a most delicate monster! his forward voice now is to speak well of his friend; his backward voice is to utter foul speeches and to detract."

But I learned to moderate this censure, and even to look upon him, as far as effect was concerned, to be a "tower of strength." It is true, he was only the *robust* half of Digges, at best, for he had not the slightest *pathos;* and so convinced were his audiences of this want, that I do think a white handkerchief in the hand of Cooke would have thrown them into a fit of immoderate laughter.

Cooke was by nature a strong man, and, as far as bad habits permitted, had great strength of mind: his acting evinced both; he never tired under the extremest vociferation: he never yielded his own judgment, or seemed at all to value the opinions of others. His temper was critical and sarcastic, and it led him to subtle distinctions, that looked like thought, but were frequently any thing but reasonable. When, in the 7th scene of the 5th act the heroic mind of Richard is hurrying on to the grand point, the *charging* of the ENEMY, the following passage occurs, in which two of his *admired* varieties were to be found.

[CATESBY hastily enters, having been despatched by Richard to lord Stanley.]

K. Rich What says Lord Stanley? will he bring his power?
Cate. He does refuse, my lord; he will not stir.
K. Rich. Off with his son George's head. [*Distant march.*]
Norf. My lord, the foe's already past the marsh:
After the battle let young Stanley die.
K. Rich. Why, after be it then,—
A thousand hearts are swelling in my bosom:
Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head:
Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood.

At this juncture, his decision as to young George Stanley is a thing of the instant; either his *life* or *death* are of little moment; they are as grains of sand whirled from a chariot-wheel in rapid rotation. Mr. Cooke fastened upon this precise point of time to affect *deliberation*, and stood, as his admirer acknowledges, swaying his body backwards and forwards, till he settled the fate of young George, and relieved the almost agonized spectators, by "*after be it then.*" The very next line, the reader sees, makes it impossible that Richard could have been deliberating about a thing so trifling:—

"A THOUSAND *hearts* are SWELLING in my bosom!"

If Cooke did say "*my* bosom," (I think he did,) he was wrong again. Richard does not mean to indulge his *vanity*, by an insult to OTHER natures: he hoped, perhaps believed, his followers to be as brave as himself. He merely expresses the expanding energy and thick palpitation of the heart, by

words that mean, "I feel as if I had a *thousand* hearts within me." But the best *fooling*, after all, was the attempt to dismount the archers from the horses, which, without his *new emphasis*, he conceived it must be inferred they bestrid.

"Spur *your* proud horses hard,"

addressed to the cavalry; having already ordered the foot soldiery, the English bowmen. As if the two directions were not already as separate as sense could make them—

Draw, ARCHERS, draw your arrows to the *head!*
Spur your proud horses *hard*, and ride in blood!

and a turn of the head sufficing to show, that they were applied to different divisions of his force!

The best of the joke is, that the new emphasis, if it did not *leave* the foot on horseback, ordered PARTICULAR men to spur at least *their* coursers hard, whatever others who had horses might do, mounted or dismounted.

"Spur YOUR proud horses *hard*, and ride in blood."

To prove all these points we have nothing to do but to look at *original* Shakspeare. Richard's instruction there as to young Stanley, is—

"Off instantly with his son George's head."

And upon Norfolk's suggestion that it should be *after* the battle, the intrepid tyrant disdains to waste a single word upon such a subject, and never *notices* the advice of Norfolk, nor decides upon it AT ALL! Shakspeare, too, *himself*, settles the whole business of the archers, and the cavalry, by making Richard address distinctly THREE distinguished parts of his army—his yeomen—his archers—his knights or lancers.

Fight, gentlemen of England! fight, bold yeomen!
* * * * * *
Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head!
* * * * * *
Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood;
Amaze the welkin with your broken staves!

And thus men get the fame of *learned* acting: aye, and of being Shakspeare's *best commentators* too, who, like their great leader, QUIN himself, never on any occasion look at a single page of his genuine works.

I have just touched these points, to show that the fame at least of *some* new readings is not likely to be very old, and that every understanding is not calculated to *add* to the prescribed meanings of the stage. The real excellence of Cooke, like that of Macklin, was a certain sturdy *force* and *cunning* combined, which fitted him for the very parts in which the veteran himself excelled. Not sufficiently heroic nor dexterous for Richard, he succeeded powerfully in *Shylock*, in *Iago*, and in the *Man of the World*. In these he did not fear, and, in honest truth, had no occason to fear, any competition in his own times. But his Sir Pertinax, on the whole, wanted the mellowness of Macklin: and the Iago and Shylock were inferior to Henderson's, the former in deep *revenge*, the latter in *passion*. He sometimes, too, in a plain blue coat, and black stockings, with a round hat in his hand, communicated so much consequence to a character, (Peregrine, for instance,) that nobody could touch him. A sizeable shelf of pamphlets, I believe, might even yet be found, all written by utterly disinterested persons, comparing Cooke with Kemble in Richard. The writers professed to know personally neither of those actors, and to write their very *falsehoods* purely for the love of TRUTH. The reader shall judge by a small sample. "In soliloquy Mr. Kemble's *eyes* and *attentions* were entirely devoted to the audience; nothing could exceed in this respect the *delicate caution* of Mr. Cooke. The *indifference* of Kemble in the scene with Lady Anne rendered his suit quite hopeless; the *wheedling flattery* of Cooke was the likeliest thing on earth to succeed." Both actors, it will be observed, necessarily spoke the same words. "When Richard has attained his object, and his brows are circled with a 'glorious diadem,' the reflection on the means by which he had obtained it, and its probable insecurity, rendered the manner of Cooke *fretful;* that of Kemble was, it seems, *uniform*." As Benedick says, "I can see yet without spectacles," and I saw no such thing. "In Mr. Kemble's three first acts," and probably the critic thinks, the first *four*, "he had neither intelligent action nor expression." The vinegar aspect of Mr. Cooke and the wagging of his fins shall pass for both, with all my heart, to people capable of forgetting the features of Mr. Kemble, and the graceful and yet powerful employment of every part of his figure. The author of these profound parallels "would have the great characters of Shakspeare performed with that *simplicity* with which they are written." I have no objection, certainly, wherever that simplicity can be *found:* only I cannot say I should have chosen Mr. Cooke for the model. Old Ireland used to talk of the *sweet simplicity* of Shakspeare's *soul;*

but then he might judge from the *body* of his works in his own possession. How often must these people be told, that Shakspeare, in serious composition, is a more elaborate writer than even Milton?

Theatres, like every thing else, produce their fruits of season: one of these is a comedy by Frederick Reynolds. Accordingly, on the 1st of November, Covent Garden exhibited one of his best, called *Life*, of which the fable was extremely interesting, and even pure, beyond this writer's usual practice. The Marchmonts were beautifully acted by Murray and his daughter. The incident it turns upon is too much, I am afraid, like life. The husband is seduced from his wife by a regular *decoy*. Marchmont is ruined, and the wife disappears, and, it is supposed, dies. She has given to her husband a daughter, of whom he is dotingly fond, and of whose education he takes the utmost care. Time operates *some* changes in NATURE; *more*, and more rapidly, in the DRAMA. Under the name of Belford the mother becomes the governess to her own daughter. Marchmont, recovered from his delusions, turns author; and his wife sends her own story to him as a novel she is composing; this leads to a recognition and reconciliation. Old Primitive, her father, who has patronised her also, without the smallest notion that she was his daughter, is at hand, with the *treasury* of the stage at his disposal. This secures a proper husband for the grand-daughter, in Sir Harry Torpid, who is rather a misnomer, since he contributes to the happiness of others.

The farcical incidents of the piece (for such there must be it seems) are found among the Lackbrains, whose cottage Primitive expects to see again, modest and humble, like its owners; but he finds the house turned out of doors—his *protegé* drunk, and his wife giving a *rout*. Their destiny is therefore reversed, and better people in his own family receive the old gentleman's property.

That a daughter may have outgrown her father's knowledge is possible; but that a husband, while their daughter is still young, should not know his wife, is a strain of probability, detected by *figure*, *features*, *manner*, and the most unchangeable of all things, *voice*. But these are venial stage offences, and the play had great and deserved popularity.

Mr. Kemble, on the 13th of December, brought out a tragedy written by Mr. Godwin, called Antonio, or the Soldier's Return. The second title was too trivial almost for comedy. This play had been accepted during the recess in Mr. Kemble's management. The author is a man of genius, calculated rather to furnish the materials of plays than the plays themselves.

Few men have more deeply meditated the drama than Mr. Godwin. How he could conceive the fable of Antonio sufficient for a tragedy of five acts is, I confess, surprising to me.

With the royal sanction, Helena D'Almanza is married to Don Guzman. She had been previously betrothed to Rodrigo, who has been taken prisoner in battle. Her brother Antonio arriving to solicit his friend's ransom, finds that he has lost his intended bride as well as his liberty. Spanish honour leads him, by the aid of his brother Henry, to carry off their sister from a country seat of her husband. They place her in a convent with great secresy, and she is compelled to take the vows. The husband in vain tries to discover the place of his wife's concealment. At length Don Henry, repenting his share of the violence, reveals the name of the convent. She is brought to court, and, to end all contest, begs to be allowed to fulfil her vows. The king is resolute for her remaining with her husband. Antonio, to save his honour, and signalize his revenge, stabs his sister to the heart. The fable of Tancred and Sigismunda is but slight, yet is it infinitely more interesting, as well from the rank of the lover, as the struggle in the heroine between affection and duty.—She is a victim, moreover, because she renders the latter triumphant.

Dr. Johnson remarks upon a description of plays among us, "which, by changing the catastrophe, were tragedies to-day and comedies to-morrow." Surely, if Antonio's arm had been held, or his sword mastered by Guzman, nobody would have been surprised to find this whole fable in one of Mrs. Centlivre's comedies. But when a writer has great force of sentiment and great splendour of diction, he is apt to think he can render captivating a fable of no intrinsic power.

The play failed altogether, notwithstanding Kemble was the Antonio and Mrs. Siddons the Helena. Charles Kemble was of course her *other* brother. Mr. Godwin on this occasion was really a philosopher; and I think himself all *but* enjoyed the ridiculous stage dilemma about his catastrophe. Here, again, as in the case of Colman's Iron Chest, I am apt to suspect the fear of offending the author injured the play. The part of Alonzo was heavy, and of unconscionable length. Mr. Kemble had much better have used his knife than burdened his memory. The names recurred, too, so incessantly upon the ear, that it must have been obvious no one but an author's could endure them.

Cooke at the other theatre added really to his reputation by acting the character of *Kitely*, in Ben Jonson's Every Man in his Humour. The rank in life of Kitely was not

above the manners of Cooke. His hasty striding of the stage backwards and forwards, the circular position of his arms, and the see-saw of the body during his meditation, were in Kitely appropriate, but in Macbeth vulgar and insufferable. I have already dilated upon the *academic* and *vulgar* styles in acting. At the head of each, meaning the *best* of each by infinite degrees, I place Kemble and Cooke.

Mr. Bayes, at Drury Lane this Christmas, exhibited himself in pantomime with great effect; he called it Harlequin Amulet, or the Magic of Mona. Johnstone, the machinist, made them a dragon of surprising terror, and serpents that were any thing but *tempting*. The historians of Harlequin record, that in this pantomime Mr. Byrne ran up a perpendicular wall, and over the top of a house, with such amazing velocity, that it was impossible to detect the means by which he was assisted. It was a very popular performance.

Mr. Kemble's principle was, as I have often stated, to keep Shakspeare as his *own* great distinction. On the 3d of January, 1801, he revived his King Lear with every care of management, and it was productive of both fame and profit to the theatre. It is really delightful to have a mingled audience all gratified, and the wisest man among them take no exception to the source of their pleasure.

Lear was followed by King John, most splendidly decorated; but there was the usual difficulty to obtain, notwithstanding the great houses, either salary for those who brought them, or even colours and canvass in the painting-room. How other people wrote may be easily imagined, when the following reached the treasury from Mr. Kemble.

"My dear Peake,

"Let me remind you, that you are to send me FIFTY pounds for Mrs. Siddons to-day, or we shall have no *King John* on Saturday.

"If you possibly can, send me a draft for the fifty pounds (which you promised to have given me last Monday se'nnight) for the author of Deaf and Dumb.

"They are standing still in Greenwood's room, for want of a little canvass. Unless you help us there, we can have no Cymbeline, nor no pantomime at Christmas. My wish is to bring out the pantomime two or three days before Christmas.

"I am very lame, but mending. Do call on one, as you go by. Yours, J. P. Kemble.

"Thursday, November 27th, 1800,
No. 89, Great Russel Street, Bloomsbury Square."

A REMINDER.

"My dear Peake,

"We are all at a stand for want of colours. If you will help us, you shall have *Cymbeline* and full houses. Otherwise, we must go on with the West Indian, &c.

"Yours, J. P. Kemble.

"Monday Morning,"

"One more, and that's the *last*." Othello.

"Tuesday, half past five.

"My dear Peake,

"It is now two days since my necessity made me send to you for sixty pounds. My request has been treated with a disregard, that I am at a loss how to account for.

"I certainly shall go, and act my part to night—but, unless you send me a hundred pounds before Thursday, I will not act on Thursday—and if you make me come a-begging again, it will be for two hundred pounds before I set my foot in the theatre.

"I am, dear Peake, yours,

J. P. Kemble."

The reader has had now a peep at some of the "secrets of that prison-house," the *treasury* of a theatre; and has seen how the very manager of it was compelled to *dun* incessantly for himself and others. He may also perceive how the aids required dribbled out from the strong box, and that they never supplied more than one exigence at a time. *King John* ought to have been done on the 29th of November, 1800; I suppose Mrs. Siddons did not get her fifty pounds, for the play was not ready till the 14th of January. Cymbeline, it appears, was all but ready, as far as it rested with Mr. Kemble, the beginning of December; but it could not be brought out till the 12th of February, 1801. The *Dragon* and the *Rattle Snakes*, however, were absolutely at work on the 22d of December.

Mr. Colman this year produced a comedy at Covent Garden Theatre, called the *Poor Gentleman*. It was acted the first time on the 11th of February, and received with great and merited applause. With respect to his ground-work, Mr. Colman's fancy had been more excursive than usual—some of his characters are from Canada, some even from Russia. The *Brambles* are here all entertaining people—the author seems to have respected the *name* that Smollet has immortalised. The Worthingtons are the worthiest people in the world; and as to Ollapod, the doctor, the sports-

man, and the cavalry volunteer, it was such a compound of whimsical extravagance, that it found full employment for the vigorous humour of Fawcett. Something very like the character Colman, perhaps, saw in this period of military passion. The Lucretia Mac Tab of Mrs. Mattocs was a *class* rather than an individual, and received with shouts of laughter by the audience. Lewis had, in Frederick Bramble, that struggle in which he delighted, between dissipation and humanity, and never distinguished himself more happily.

Mr. Kemble at last delivered to the general admiration the result of what his taste and judgment had enabled him to do for Cymbeline. The anachronisms of the great poet combine the *generals* of Augustus with *modern Italians*, *human sacrifices*, and *modern luxuries* in Britain. More incongruity than this play exhibits will not easily be found; but all-atoning *nature* in the characters, the sentiments, and the expression, with incidents picturesque in the truest sense, and nearly endless variety, render it a favourite on the stage of our times. Here a problem arises of difficult solution as to Shakspeare. If we did not *know* the contrary, we should be apt to conclude that, dramatically, he lived upon *anticipation*. His fancy for ever prompted him with scenery, that *his* Globe could never even affect to exhibit; and it was, probably, some strong feeling of the contrast between his *means* and ends, that led Mr. Steevens, against all authority, to conclude, that there must have been moveable, painted, perspective scenes in the theatres of Shakspeare's time.

However, the period was come when we no longer had to request the spectators to

"Piece out our IMPERFECTIONS with their *thoughts*."

The scenery of this play, with some bearing upon the confusion of the manners, was a beautiful *mélange*. The acting of Posthumus by Kemble was then, as ever, delightful. Imogen had the full charm of the Siddons, and every body else did all that could be expected from zeal and diligence under so able a teacher. But what Mr. Kemble used to call the *prettiest* thing he ever saw upon the stage, was the *elegant rusticity* of the two boys, Guiderius and Arviragus, performed by C. Kemble and young Decamp, who really looked to be of the same family.

In the last scene of the play, Belarius presents to the king the young princes whom he had stolen, and kept with him in his banishment. The exclamation of their father is full of nature.

"If these be they, I know not how to wish
A pair of worthier sons.—Guiderius had
Upon his neck a *mole*, a *sanguine star*;
It was a mark of wonder."

The innocent enjoyment with which Charles Kemble presented himself, for the verification of this natural test, did not escape the tasteful eye of his brother.—"THAT now, Charles," said he, "was the POETRY of *acting*." Thus he had fixed there, with no fading charms, *Lear*, *John*, and *Cymbeline*, and they brought a succession of very brilliant houses.

Nor was this the end of our able manager's labours for the season: he had, as his letter already given shows, procured a translation from the play of Mr. Bouilly, called *Deaf and Dumb*; and, as was his custom, revised it with the utmost care. He determined upon acting the virtuous *Abbé de l'Epée* himself, and cast the interesting unfortunate *Theodore*, I will say, *equally* well. Miss Decamp had a power of expression in look and gesture, that was even more intelligent than language;—it was the *lightning* of the mind, and reduced the labour of disclosure to a *point*, and the detection of villany to a *glance*.

Mr. Kemble aided this pantomime of my fair friend by a benevolence that was quite paternal; he appeared to love his pupil as a son, and followed his indications with the decision and the zeal of the most enlightened philanthropy. The play was in all its parts most perfectly acted. The great master of the English stage needed no *foreign* lessons in his own art;—but, when writing to his brother from Paris, in the summer of 1802, he notices that he had seen his rival, Monvel, in the Abbé, and *admired* his performance; the *rest* of the performers he thought inferior to the English. The play *here* had the greatest possible attraction.

Mr. Fawcett, at the other house, took his turn to amuse, if not instruct, by his really clever historical pantomime of *La Perouse*, or the Desolate Island. This piece was founded upon a drama by the prolific Kotzebue. The navigator becomes another Robinson Crusoe, and his preserver is a better sort of Ourang Outang, named a Champanzee, whose sagacity is not only diverting, but often very essential. Poor Menage skipped through this semi-rational brute with untiring activity and intelligence. Farley, every way the first in this sort of exhibition, directed the whole performance. I seize the present opportunity to express my sense of his indefatigable exertions for the public amusement, during a long series

of theatrical seasons. He is a *master* in his art, and a most worthy man.

Michael Angelo Rooker, an artist of very great talent, died on the 3d of March this year, in Dean street. In small figure, for book embellishment, he equalled De Loutherbourg; and some of his scenery for old Colman was quite upon a par with what that great artist had left in Garrick's theatre. When a child, I remember looking over him in the front of the house, while with a rapid pencil he freely, but adequately, sketched the procession of the Jubilee, as the characters passed.

On the 12th of March, Mrs. Jordan resumed her performances for the season with the Country Girl. It seemed to be understood at Drury, that she now entirely laid down the dagger of the serious muse. Universality is a proud hope to indulge, but in practice mischievous. If in the train of either muse, an actress suffers by comparison, the *failure* in the one operates as an abatement of the *excellence* in the other; and persons who would not be thought malignant, are among the foremost to exclaim—"Aye, but did you see THALIA in *tragedy* the other night? THERE was a business!"

Mr. Cooke, at Covent Garden, on the 8th of April added *Sir Giles Overreach* to his list of parts. He played it as he did *Richard*, and there he was strictly right in every thing he did. In the convulsive agony, however, he was only *noisy*; his face refused to supply what breath failed to utter. Still, the *exultation*, and the *horror*, alike, were perfect only in Henderson.

The stage is condemned to perpetual imitation. A *ghost* is followed by a long train of *spectres*. Even *defects* of nature take their turn to interest, and the *deaf* and the *dumb* and the *blind* are selected for amusement. The success of *Deaf and Dumb* at Paris probably conducted Morton to the *Blind Girl*. He therefore, not *entirely*, casts away a surgeon on the coast of Peru, who, by his humanity, first saves a lovely blind girl from violation, and ultimately by his skill restores her to sight. The reader will naturally expect the nuptial *couch* to be the reward of so successful an experiment. This was an opera with some character, equivoque, pleasantry, song, dance, procession and picturesque dresses—well acted and greatly admired. It was first performed on the 12th of April.

Mr. Kemble next produced a tragedy by Mr. Sotheby, the accomplished translator of Oberon. He struggled with the tedious horrors of Count Julian, through five acts, the detail of which I omit, because the play proved completely unsuccessful.

To *Adelmorn*, the outlaw, he was not quite so complaisant; that hero was bestowed upon Charles Kemble. Monk Lewis promised here to surpass the *effect* even of the Castle Spectre. His ghost appeared *three* times on the first performance, but *once* was afterwards found more than sufficient. The dialogue was rather mean, and was often received with laughter by the audience. It occupied a few nights in the month of May.

On the 11th of this month Mr. Cooke took the first of those *strange liberties* with the public, that afterwards became insulting and insufferable. He came on in Richard, and could not be heard; and, upon being desired to speak out, had the audacity to exhibit signs of *contempt* and *menace* to a part of the audience; and in an abrupt manner walked off the stage at nearly the end of the fourth act. Upon his coming on again, and showing some signs of *contrition*, he was permitted to finish the part. On the 17th and 18th of June the winter theatres closed.

CHAP. XV.

Season of 1801-2.—*The great rivals.—Cooke disappoints the public.—Mrs. Billington at both theatres.—Henry Siddons.—Escapes.—Cooke's audit.—Mrs. Billington's illness.—Reynolds.—Folly as it Flies.—Browne.—Mrs. Litchfield.—Kemble's Zanga.—His Request.—Braham in the Manly Robe.—Henry the Fifth.—A riot quelled by the military.—R. Palmer's Falstaff.—Alfonso.—Urania.—The Cabinet.—The Dillettanti.—Mr. Kemble announces the Duke of Bedford's death.—The Winter's Tale.—Cooke's Sir Pertinax.—Strawberry Hill comedy.—Mr. King's retirement.—Honours paid to him.—Close of the season.—Mr. Kemble quits Drury Lane.—Theatrical property.—Some clamour against him and his family.—Novelties at Colman's.*

The summer theatre, during the season of 1801, lost the valuable aid of Charles Kemble, who had determined to indulge himself in a tour through Germany. Miss Decamp, too, declined the same summer engagement, and their retreat made room for Henry Johnstone and his wife. Mr. Colman this summer was so amply frequented to his stock pieces, that he needed but little novelty, and the little he had was of no value. There was a two-act farce, called the *Gypsey Prince*, which was rendered bearable by some very pretty music by Kelly; and a thing called the *Corsair*, or the Italian Nuptials. The vigour of H. Johnstone and Farley, with a program a yard long, and new scenes by the dozen, rendered it somewhat intelligible to the spectators, and I am afraid, in the long list of annual horrors of this kind, that the Corsair must have been often *pirated*.

On the 12th of September, the Drury Lane company commenced the season of 1801-2 with the performance of *Richard the Third*, and *No Song no Supper;* and it was intended that the rival tragedians should decide their *difference* in Bosworth Field, and a mighty difference, to be sure, existed between them. But on the 14th, Covent Garden Theatre was found wanting in its champion, and some most flighty extravagances from the over-heated zeal of Murray drove him from the contest with the pit orators. Lewis then advanced, and offered the discontented their money back. Seven o'clock, however,

having by this time arrived, and the majority remaining immovable, the whole audience took *Lovers' Vows* with Selima and Azor instead of their money; and having by this acquired some taste for the drunken insolence of Cooke, they now waited for all the tribe of apologetic letters, certificates from physicians, true as to the illness, but in course concealing the cause of it, and the prodigy's own excuse, if he could be kept in his senses to make one. In the summer his marriage with Miss Daniels, fortunately for the lady, had been annulled by Sir William Scott.

We were now advancing rapidly to that extravagance in the terms demanded by great singers, which nothing short of madness would think of complying with. The instance which I am about to offer, is one as to a lady, for whom I have expressed always the warmest admiration. Mrs. Billington had formed an engagement to sing alternately at the two theatres, from October to the April following, for which the proprietors were to secure to her (benefits included) 2000*l.* from each treasury. She sang on the 3d and 8th of October, and (in her case I may say) *acted* Mandane in Arne's noble opera Artaxerxes, with powers little short of wonderful. Mrs. Billington's figure here was, as it should be, majestic; there was that visibly about her, that rendered the interest credible. We are grown tired, or ought to be by this time, of receiving every *slip* of a girl, with neither manners nor motion above a ballad-singer, warbling, however prettily, the sublimities of Arne. We should feel the ridiculous still more strongly, if they were to endeavour to *miss* the higher parts in tragedy.

On the 8th of October, Mr. Henry Siddons, the elder son of the great actress, made his first appearance in London. He very unluckily chose for his debût the character of a German lawyer in a very moral insipidity, called *Integrity*. It lasted only a second night, and no author was named for the failure. It might be the actor's own. The appearance of this gentleman denoted very clearly the stock he came from—but he walked the stage ungracefully, and though his features were expressive, the expression was not captivating: and the judgment that regulated his delivery, could do little in the modulation of a hoarse and heavy quality of voice. He was ardent and sensible, feeling and correct—but the most that *prepossession* even could do, was to breathe a wish that he might not have deceived himself in his choice of a profession. On the 12th, he showed more of his powers in the great trial part of Hamlet. Defective modulation of the organ was principally to be noted, and the character was neither "the

glass of fashion, nor the mould of form." Siddons never was *ethereal;* he was a studious, ingenious, and careful man, greatly respected, but as an actor only respectable.

A very pleasing afterpiece, called the *Escapes*, or the Water Carrier, claims a line of notice, because it had some really charming music, selected from Cherubini, and composed by Attwood, and also that it was extremely serviceable to Covent Garden.

At that theatre, on the 19th of October, Mr. Cooke came to his audit for the disappointment which he had occasioned on the first night of the present season. He entered before the curtain in the dress of Richard, and addressed the audience. "He acknowledged that he had no *permission* to stay in the country so long as he did; that it was certainly in his *power* to have appeared at the proper time before them: he expressed his deep regret for their disappointment, and would now do his best in their service if they were so indulgent as to permit him."

In all these cases the present result is clear; a people, who come to be amused, will not go away without their entertainment. He who can gratify, will always be pardoned; but the ease of his absolution confirms him in his trespass; at last he grows too indecent to be born, too insecure to be trusted; and, in an odd sort of struggle between his vice and his necessity, is sometimes docile, and at others refractory; followed, in spite of his errors, on account of genius which they seem to enlarge; till intemperance finally destroys the frame, and he is regretted, by a strange inconsistency, often beyond the steady, the unblamable servant of the public.

The disappointments suffered from the *gentler* sexes in theatres are at all events of a gentle character—slight caprice, not often; real indisposition; and, in the greatest talents indeed, an affection for *home* on certain evenings of the week, commonly known by the name of *box fever*.

Poor Mrs. Billington, on the 21st of October, acted Mandane again at Drury Lane, and through two acts exerted herself, so that no illness was felt to fetter her powers at all, and she sang with her utmost brilliancy. At the end of the second act, she had suddenly dropped down, and a succession of most alarming fits rendered it impossible for her to go on with the character. Mr. Kemble himself explained her situation to the public, and they allowed the farce to begin, instead of any mutilated attempt at the third act of the opera.

The real cause was, that, the day before, she had sent for Mr. Heaviside, the surgeon, to inspect her arm, which was much inflamed, and gave her very acute pain. Mr. Heavi-

side at length, on the morning of the 21st, took out an entire needle from below the right shoulder. The arm had assumed a black appearance, and her friendly surgeon dissuaded her strongly from venturing to the theatre; but she could not bear to disappoint the public, and yet struggled in vain against the dread of mortification from the blackness of the arm. Happily, no such consequence followed the accident. In a fortnight she got well.

On the 29th, Reynolds again delighted the town with a comedy called *Folly as it Flies*. The serious incidents are the consequences of dissipation; but his Lady Melmoth not being depraved, though deluded, recovers her wits at last by the aid of her virtues, and even comfort is secured by cutting off an entail in the 5th act. Fortunately that entail was not the generous Tom Tick (Lewis), nor the legacy hunter, *Peter Post Obit* (Munden). *This* character, the *hæredipeta* of antiquity, untouched, I think, upon the modern stage, was suggested by the 197th and following paper of the Rambler. Dr. Johnson exposes the folly of sacrifices in order to obtain legacies—and shows that the tricks to conciliate favour may be always betrayed by an accomplice. Reynolds looked at the character, as he commonly did at ALL characters, on the ludicrous side. He contrives, therefore, to embarrass *his* legacy-hunter with all the debts of Tom Tick, in order to become his heir, and assigns over to him even a guardianship of Leonard's mistress. So that seriously and comically he is provided amply to his catastrophe.

Peter Post Obit, it should be stated, is not at all indebted to *Le Legataire*, of Regnard, which the author, I believe, never read to the present hour. The French nation once delighted in the wit, in the sallies of pleasantry, in the general air of the enjoyment, that breathed through the writings of Regnard. His gaiety is cultivated, his eccentricity is amiable. But the spectators of such a poet must learn to be hearers, and enjoy themselves like *rational* beings. They, like ourselves, must get back again from the *eye* to the *ear*, or all that is excellent in the drama will be, like the other antiquities of the nation, the entertainment of the studious, and confined to the closet.

On the 27th of November, to the Gamester of Mr. Browne, a very judicious actor, Mr. Cooke performed Stukely with considerable effect; not so plausible, not so genteel as John Palmer, yet, the *visual* prepossession against him got over, he played it powerfully. I mean by this, that any body might be gulled by him, who could once bring himself to endure his company; but Palmer looked qualified to ensnare

and ruin the brightest spirit. Mrs. Litchfield made a very powerful impression indeed, in Mrs. Beverley, among those accustomed to the wonders of Mrs. Siddons. Is it possible to bestow praise more enviable? Murray, in Jarvis, had more *passion* than Aickin, and was, personally, quite as respectable.

Mr. Kemble, on the 4th of December, revived Dr. Young's tragedy, the Revenge. His Zanga, at any time, repaid the utmost attention of a refined audience. Dr. Young, though not a secure model for tragic writers, because he is frequently turgid, and, as in the *Night Thoughts*, (a subject still more solemn,) devoted to flowery prettiness, and Italian conceits, is nevertheless, in the character of Zanga, always *poetical*, *impassioned*, and sometimes even *sublime*. To this part, therefore, Mr. Kemble ardently devoted every congenial feeling of his mind, and it was a performance that ranked absolutely with the author's power. On this night he had a great house, and one, unfortunately, uncommonly noisy. In a word, they were *not* Athenians. In the middle of the fourth act, he saw clearly, that if the gods thus continued to keep their "dreadful pudder" o'er his head, his fine burst, in the fifth act, where the whole concentered venom of the fiend thunders out—

"Know then,—'Twas I,"

might be as well sung as spoken; so he suddenly stopped, in the midst of a speech, and addressed the noisy, with a sweetmeat of respect, to induce them to bear a dose of very *cool* and even *sarcastic* counsel. I insert it, though *some* succeeding managers have gone far beyond him in the *tone* of such expostulations.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"We cannot express how much we feel obliged to you, for the honour of your attendance; but, at this rate, the object of your visit must be completely frustrated. We must, therefore, entreat you to *condescend* to favour us with a *little more* of your ATTENTION."

The turbulent were literally quelled by it; "governed their roaring throats," and vehemently "applauded their monitor."

The 9th of December, 1801, claims a particular record in stage history, as introducing Braham, now an adult, to the *complete honours* of vocal excellence. He acted the generosity

of Alla Bensalla, a king of Ceuta: and sang such music as Mazzinghi and Reeve supplied for himself and Storace, in an opera written for them expressly by Prince Hoare, called Chains of the Heart, or the *Slave by Choice*. Munden bustled through the business of a grand slave-master, and Storace was his favourite. Fawcett was remembered for a *dancing-master*, and Johnstone was an *O'Phelim*, a cook to a regiment of Portuguese. The piece needed improvement, and by the author's docility, became somewhat better in its progress.

Mr. Kemble, on the 14th, at the other house, revived again his *Henry V.*, and was as greatly and justly admired in that hero as ever. Let me grace even Kemble with praise from the judicious. The late Earl of Guilford esteemed his fifth Henry the most perfect of his performances. He wrote an essay upon it, in my possession, with the utmost elegance, and quite decisive as to its various merits, if any body, critically, had ever questioned them.

On the 26th of December, one of those disgusting scenes of barbarous riot occurred at Covent Garden, originating from the monstrous practice of carrying spirits into the theatre, and generally providing, among the lower orders, for a few hours' entertainment, as if they were to garrison a town besieged. The play was Richard III. The first missile that threatened execution was a *wine glass*. On the entry of Betterton, as Tressel, to Murray, who acted King Henry VI. a *quart bottle* grazed his hat; the actor took it up, and walked off the stage. The indignation of the audience burst out against the villain, who was, after an obstinate resistance, secured where he sat, in the front row of the two-shilling gallery, on the King's side. Some very unlucky alterations in the performances, from indisposition, kept up the Saturnalian license of the rabble, and the trumpets, and the shouts of Bosworth Field, could not be heard. The actors became a sort of *Shrove Tuesday* sport to these brutes: and they enjoyed and prolonged the agile feats of Emery, who jumped away with singular misery, from the various *throws* at him, consisting of all the apples and oranges supplied by the fruit women. Something like this occurs in international warfare, and the merchant profitably supplies the enemy with ammunition, to be used against his country.

The farce was hurried over: the ladies would not, at last, come upon the stage: the pit took part in the tumult: the lights were extinguished, and the benches were becoming unseated, when Brandon, at the head of a few remaining soldiers, with their bayonets fixed, about *five* guardsmen, on a sudden appeared in the gallery. The glittering steel had a

very calming effect upon the mischievous, and this cruel and dastardly mob slunk away in haste out of the theatre, then nearly quite dark.

And if "considerations infinite" did not make against it, considerations to which theatres, with their whole treasures of either instruction or amusement, are indeed *nothing*, I could always wish the MILITARY to act on such occasions; because, when the storm *rages*, any other action is very *bad acting* indeed. Nothing but the fear of their *lives* will alarm our rabble sufficiently to quiet them.

Dibdin, this year, invented for Mr. Harris, a very clever pantomime, called Harlequin's Almanack, or the *Four Seasons*. It was quite a magazine of changes, and the scenery was beautifully painted by Hollogan, Whitmore, and Cresswell.

On the 11th of January, 1802, Mr. Kemble allowed R. Palmer to *attempt* the character of Falstaff, in the first part of Henry IV. He had the bustle and the roar of an old stager, who might have been endured in Pistol, but never advanced to the *brain* of Falstaff. To see how grossly unfounded theatrical pretensions will sometimes be: here was an actor of no *marked* comic humour, seldom seen too in any parts of more than slight importance, bold enough to try to *swagger* through the compilation of *all* humours, the "mountain of delight,"—

"The COMIC WORLD in *one*."

For thus Sir John is characterized by Garrick, in an *Ode*, remarkably true as to character, however defective in the higher tone of poetry.

Mr. Kemble and Wroughton were the Hotspur and King Henry, and very admirable indeed was the skill they both displayed. Only that one wanted *more* of it, I thought Kemble's Hotspur quite upon a par with his *fifth* Harry.

On the 15th, Mr. Lewis's tragedy of *Alfonso*, King of Castile, was brought out at Covent Garden Theatre. This writer was a man of talent, and one of the *coolest* conversers that I ever knew. It was only in his inventions, or perhaps imitations, that he revelled in guilt and horror. His fancy teemed with monsters;—treason, frenzy, lust, poison, stabbing, shooting, parricide, suicide; the dungeon, the battle, and that MINE of dramatic wealth, a *blow up*, with the usual garb of language for such members, extravagant and bombastic rants, and such a prodigy as Alfonso stalked portentously before a gaping crowd.

I should really sicken to tell the story of this tragedy, which

embraces *every one* of the charming characteristics just enumerated. But let me not defraud the meritorious. Mrs. Litchfield, in the disgusting Ottilia, was extremely powerful; the Johnstones, male and female, did, I think, full justice to the author; and the *virtues* of Orsino sat *unusually* well upon Cooke. I remember, it was a full *hour* too long; some critics said FOUR.

The Hon. Mr. Spencer, on the 22d, exhibited Miss Decamp in a very pleasing musical entertainment, called *Urania*. There is a print of her in this character, and not very unlike. Charles Kemble was a prince of preternatural turn, whose illuminated mind is devoted to unseen intelligences, etherial spirits, and the whole rabble of the Rosicrusian system, by which vanity has been led to presume peculiar gifts, and not the wisest of our race have fancied themselves superior to their "even Christian." By a trick he falls in love with the Princess Urania.

The Popes, in the month of January, passed to Drury Lane Theatre, and were both well received. Among Mr. Kemble's revivals in this, his last season, were the *Distressed Mother*, the *Mourning Bride*, the *Orphan*, the *Double Dealer*, and the *Winter's Tale*.

At the other house, T. Dibdin's very entertaining opera of the *Cabinet* began its musical course on the 9th of February, and as my readers are perfectly acquainted with a piece so popular and amusing, I hardly need to preserve more in this work than the names of a perfect *concert* of composers, who joined in the music of the Cabinet—Reeve, Moorhead, Davie, Corri, and Braham; and to add that, for vocal strength, it had the powers of Braham, Incledon, and Storace; and that of acting merit, it boasted of Munden, Fawcett, Emery, and Blanchard; Mrs. H. Johnston, Mrs. Mattocks, and Mrs. Davenport.

It is not *dramatically* true, that, "when things are at the worst, they will mend." Mr. Cumberland had been writing himself *down*, with a zealous rapidity quite unequalled, and on the 2d of March he distressed his friends before and behind the curtain equally, by a non-descript, called *Lovers' Resolutions*. It *was* heard to the end, and properly withdrawn by the author.

I dare say, that it is at present but *partially* known, that the concert of ancient music was once given in Tottenham Street; however inconveniently the rooms at that time were situated for the attendance of the higher orders. A dilletanti society, in March 1802, opened the place for the performance of French two-act comedies and proverbs—the subscribers

paid five guineas each, and one guinea in lieu of the Pic-nic. As they needed wine at their collations, and none could be sold there, so Mrs. Gilpin's own resource,

> "They would be furnished with their own,
> Which is both bright and clear."

Six bottles composed a single quota; half white, half red. The whole, no doubt, originated with a set of ruined emigrants from France, whom exile and poverty still found gay, and therefore anxious for the *spectacle*, if they even exhibited *themselves*. Among the performers, I find the name of my old friend, M. de Nogent, a gentleman of the most triumphant temper, that ever blessed a human creature. In society, the gentlest, blandest being that I ever knew. Contented with little, unaffected and diverting; he was better than Harlequin to a child, and more than a physician to its father.

On the 9th of March, after the Beggar's Opera, Mr. Kemble, in full mourning, came forward, and in the name of the proprietors announced, that on Thursday next, that theatre would be closed, on account of the funeral of the Most Noble Francis Duke of Bedford. This tribute of respect to the ground landlord of the edifice was feelingly approved by the audience. His grace's character is matter now of history; but charity may hope, that it is more accurately drawn by Mr. Fox, though impassioned at the moment by recent loss and remembered kindness, than by Mr. Burke, irritated by attack, and resenting an injury. But I am sensible that, in a great degree, party feeling will long continue to decide between compositions so opposite in their character and tendency. I leave upon my page, with pleasure, the most striking paragraph of Mr. Fox's eulogy.

"Let it not be thought, to whatever degree I may be supposed to feel the obligations of private gratitude or affection, or in whatever light I may view actions, which whether in relation to the largest and most important, or to the very least concerns of my life, will endear his memory to my heart to the latest hour of it; let it not be supposed, that I have taken this unusual opportunity of expressing them, only to strew flowers over his grave. No, sir; it is for the sake of impressing his great example upon the public; it is that men may see it, that they may feel it, that they may talk of it in their domestic circles, and hold it up, wherever it can be imitated, to the imitation of their children and posterity."

The duke died of the operation for strangulated *hernia*, in the 37th year of his age.

It was on the 24th of the month that Mr. Kemble presented his revival of the *Winter's Tale*, in all the splendour of decoration and power of acting, that he could impress upon it. I have already remarked the studies of Mrs. Siddons after the antique; in Paulina's chapel, she now stood one of the noblest statues, that even Grecian taste ever invented. The figure composed something like one of the muses in profile. The drapery was ample in its folds, and seemingly stony in its texture. Upon the magical words, pronounced by Paulina, "Music; awake her: strike;" the sudden action of the head absolutely *startled*, as though such a miracle had really vivified the marble; and the descent from the pedestal was equally graceful and affecting. In Leontes, Mr. Kemble was every thing that either feeling or taste could require; and the affection of Paulina never had a representative equal to Mrs. Powell. The Perdita was a very delicate and pretty young lady of the name of Hickes, thus much I remember of her; but whether she had more or fewer requisites than other candidates for this lovely character, I am now unable to decide. I incline to think that this part is one of the few upon the stage that never was adequately performed. It is so difficult, at the proper age of the debutante, to find a simplicity, almost rustic, combining with the princely impulses that urge their way either to brave disaster, or partake the kindling wonders of unexpected restoration. Our stage princesses are so seldom personally at their ease, and are too sensible of an audience, to be much like the royal virgin. *Our* Perdita seems, in spite of the fifth act of the play, condemned *never* "to be found."

Perhaps no revival ever drew greater crowds than this did.

At Covent Garden, Fawcett invented a terrible robber, called *Brazen Mask*, who bursts through all fastnesses, and seems something supernatural; and Mr. Cooke, on the 10th of April, acted Sir Pertinax Mac Sycophant in Macklin's *Man of the World*, for the first time in London. Although I myself thought the veteran a better impersonation of his own conceptions, yet Mr. Kemble expressed the most unqualified admiration of Mr. Cooke's performance, and said, "that comedy had nothing like it." If any one should remark sagaciously, that "he never said this, nor any thing like it, of his *tragedy*:" I answer, that he did not want candour enough to make such an admission, had he really thought it; but it was *impossible* for him to think so; his conception of all tragedy was of another CLASS—but I need not repeat myself.

There is frequently about managers a desire to profit out of the regular course of business. General Conway's comedy, called *False Appearances*, had been thus smuggled into Drury Lane Theatre, and now a second importation, from some of the family, followed, under the title of *Fashionable Friends*. Rumour stated it to have been found among Lord Orford's papers; and it was acted, it seems, at Strawberry Hill, by a set of *fashionable friends*, I trust of a "better leer" than those of the comedy; who literally, for their *hypocrisy* and *treachery*, their *indecency* and their *sensuality*, ought to have been *executed* in the last act, as an example to an age, of which they pretended to be a specimen. If it can be fairly fathered upon neither the General, nor *Horace*, perhaps it might be the *enfant trouvé* of Richard Bentley, not the commentator, but his son, who, with various talents, did nothing to the *purpose*, in a life of unwilling and sometimes rebellious dependence.

On the second night, 23d March, it was decidedly withdrawn.

The reader of stage history, if, like myself, he have really *seen* and *known* many eminent performers, will, like me, suffer pain NOT *equal* to his enjoyment, (for such a measure never can be dealt,) but still *considerable* pain, when, in the decline of life, a great actor quits a profession of which he has been the distinguished ornament.

I have announced many of these closing scenes, in the course of this work, and the majority of them have unfortunately withdrawn from the stage what, most favourably considered, can never be *speedily* replaced; I mean MATURE EXCELLENCE. The 24th of May, 1802, was saddened by the farewell of Mr. King, whose merits, as I always warmly felt them, so I trust they have received from me a suitable and characteristic encomium. He was the father of that respectable circle of performers, who had been bred in the school of Garrick, and who continued through life (none more zealously than Mr. King,) to bear testimony to the excellence of their great master.

Mr. King had latterly been a good deal distressed by failure of memory, and he needed a very painful tensity of care, to keep even his *old* studies in tolerable condition. However, he acted his favourite, Sir Peter Teazle in the School for Scandal, with considerable effect, for the last time—though his face bore rather too evident signs of the ravages of age: indeed, it at all times was very strongly marked, and not flexible to many changes of expression.

At the termination of the comedy, he came forward to ad-

dress the audience in lines, which Mr. Cumberland had written for him; and Charles Kemble, with the graceful attention of *Orlando* to the *old Adam* of As You Like It, came on with him, in order to give the word, if, in his agitation, Mr. King should be for a moment at a loss. I was anxious to see accurately how the great comedian struggled with his feelings, and placed myself immediately under him. His eye showed but little—but his lip trembled, and his voice faltered. A few lines of the address will merit to be here preserved.

> "Whilst in my heart those feelings yet survive,
> That keep respect and gratitude alive—
> Feelings which, though all others should decay,
> WILL BE THE LAST THAT TIME CAN BEAR AWAY."

The uneasy notion, that defect must need indulgence, is beautifully put.

> "Who, that retains the sense of brighter days,
> Can sue for PARDON, while he pants for PRAISE?
> On well-earn'd fame the mind with pride reflects,
> But PITY *sinks* the man whom it *protects*."

Amid the thunders of applause, which the spectators bestowed upon a service, an able and finished service, of FIFTY-FOUR years, Mrs. Jordan advanced to lead off the highly-honoured actor, and she conducted him to a seat in the Green Room.

After a little pause, that he might recover from the shock he had just sustained, Mr. Dowton requested that he would take a cheerful draught out of a silver cup, which his brothers and sisters of the theatre begged him to accept, with the accompanying salver, as a mark of their admiration and grateful regard. Suitable return to this was made by Mr. King, who, in the expression of his sensibility, assured them that, if his health permitted, he should gratify himself by frequently coming among them. The motto on the cup is happy beyond parallel. It is from Henry V. Act 5.

> "If he be not *fellow* with the best king,
> Thou shalt find him the *best* KING of good fellows."

The cup was then passed round, and all the children of Thespis drank *the* KING's health. Who shall say that the decline of life is divested of its comforts? The slope sun, westering fast and hastening to its descent, sends up a reviving gleam of radiance to cheer the passenger, before the shades

of evening finally enfold him, and he must journey on his way with, at *best*, subsidiary light.

On the 24th of June the theatre closed for the season, with Shakspeare's comedy of Twelfth Night, and the Flitch of Bacon. Mr. Kemble made the usual acknowledgments for the proprietors and the performers. It was now understood publicly that his connection with the theatre of Drury was at an end, and that he had determined to pass some months in a tour upon the continent.

The fact was, that he had been in treaty, through Mr. Morris, a very amiable friend, and a dramatic writer, for the purchase of one FOURTH of the Drury Lane property :—but Morris was a very able lawyer, and the concern could not make him out a *title* on which he thought it advisable for Mr. Kemble to risk his whole fortune; the treaty therefore broke off, and Mr. Kemble carried his offer to the rival theatre.

I shall in course take care, in the notice of this transfer of the Kemble family from the stage of Garrick to that of Rich, to avoid all comments drawn from the event. What *prima facie* appeared to me, for I am indifferent as to any clamour at the time, was that I never could obtain, even from my dear friend himself, any reason for his eager desire to become a purchaser. Suppose, for instance, he was convinced, *communibus annis*, that theatres were *not* losing concerns; he must often have experienced failures from accidental causes, quite out of the control of the most provident manager that ever existed. A wet season, a severe winter, public calamity, or public caprice, any or all of these, would at times occasion difficulty, *without* the surer opposition of other not less formidable circumstances; such as co-proprietors long radicated in the concern, of great name, and powers and influence, whom it might be frequently impracticable to conciliate, and certainly ruinous either to thwart or indulge.

Suppose him to have paid down 30,000*l.*, or some other larger sum, to Mr. Sheridan, as the price of his fourth share, it followed, in course, that the money must have paid off, at best, some of the embarrassments of the house; or it would give him only a legal title to a bankrupt concern. If thus bestowed, what was afterwards to supply the even *moderate* demands of a man with the high rank in society which Mr. Sheridan, on the score of his talents, was obliged to maintain? He never *did* depend upon party—his political conduct was marked by some sturdy features of *independence*. As a member of administration, his dearest friends confessed that he was not calculated for regular application. He was too

indolent for office, and too proud at any time to be bought. Richardson was as indolent as himself.

Surely, surely, the mere "*whistling* of a name," as one of our poets expresses it, or "the fine notion of a busy man," in the language of Cowley, ought to have been minor objects to Mr. Kemble, who by professional talent alone, at least commanded near THREE THOUSAND a year, while he had his health: without a care, because without a risk.* He had seen the *signs* of these times, and been himself, for others, obliged to obey them. The rage for *spectacle* he saw ruined a theatre in its wardrobe and painting-room. There could be no hope that the moderate days of Garrick would ever return. He had a decent fortune, or he would not have purchased. His sister was even wealthy—and he had himself no children.

I am myself convinced, however irreconcileable such a thing might be to his general prudence, that he expected to survive those with whom he should connect himself; and that he really then ambitioned a theatre, to be called exclusively after his name. As a proof of this, afterwards in his agreement with Mr. Harris, an additional clause was attached to the deed, by which he was, on the death of the chief proprietor, to have an *option* of purchasing THE WHOLE at a specific sum, 150,000*l*.

The clamour to which I have above alluded started from persons connected with the theatre, who endeavoured to excite odium against the members of a family, which, they said, "had made their fortunes under the roof of Drury, and now left it to its fate, to carry all their talents and their connexions to the rival house." But I have sufficiently shown, that they were very disagreeably situated as to the salaries for which they laboured, and they were large creditors of the concern. Even patience itself cannot be entirely without limits.

The Haymarket season was rather unsuccessful. A three-act comedy, which is rather strongly attributed to Morton, and called *Beggar my Neighbour*, fell under the displeasure it excited: as it was not printed, I cannot, however willing, "dispute the judgment of the senate;" besides that it will readily be conceived that Morton, in any dramatic work, would not write meanly, though he might employ his pains upon an unthankful subject.

A farce, by Oulton, called the Sixty Third Letter, in the character of *Dulcet* by Fawcett, afforded rather a novelty: a footman ballad-mad, who cannot contain himself, if he hear

* Mr. Kemble's salary, as actor and manager, was 56*l*. 14*s*. per week

a street organ. But then this is *Farce!*—utter absurdity rewarded by broad-faced laughter.

The success, in Paris, of the *Jugement de Salomon*, by M. Caigniez, led me to translate and adapt it for Colman's, under the title of the *Voice of Nature*. I am fully sensible of the impropriety of such a subject NOW, either *religiously* or *morally* considered. And I wish no more of it to be remembered than my thanks to the very excellent performers of the characters. It however excited the feelings of the audience very strongly, and was serviceable to the theatre.

As far as I remember, the Burletta called *Fairy Revels* was the first of those pieces, which have littered our stages with precocious children; some of whom must be admitted to have been prodigies. When we consider the *flattery* or the *servility* that were necessary to fix the attention of infancy, and make it do the work of *maturity;* when we add to this AVARICE in the parent, the danger of late hours, and the indecency of public exposure as they respect the children; the early food supplied to *vanity*, and, as a consequence, the utter loss of *modesty*, that early and most charming grace of youth; even a corrupt people must shudder, if they are troubled with the slightest reflection in their amusements.

Mr. Colman, this season, announced to his performers, and at the close of it to the public, that he could engage no one who was not at liberty to join him on the 15th May, and continue with him till the 15th September. This struggle has often been made, and made in vain. The summer manager may "skir the country round" and try to collect an *independent* troop of at least kindred merit with those which sustain the winter houses. If he succeed, even the excellent soon yield to the stronger temptation of winter engagements, and then as to him become *limited;* if he fail, his inferiority will be noticed and his theatre deserted; for even the *decent* will not be born, if better can be had.

The best part of Mr. Colman's invitation to the public was "the pledge of his own farther attempts " at dramatic composition, whose pen he hoped, however long they had encouraged it, was not yet quite worn out in their service." The whole address, at great length, was very ardently delivered by Fawcett, the acting manager, after the Voice of Nature.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAP. I.

Season of 1802-3.—*John Bannister stage manager.*—*Mr. Graham and his Board.*—*Dwyer.*—*Cooke's Hamlet.*—*Correct Text, how important.*—*Collins.*—*S. Kemble in Falstaff.*—*Lewis suddenly struck with apoplexy.*—*Delays and Blunders.*—*Tale of Mystery.*—*Melo Drame, what.*—*A House to be sold.*—*Mrs. Litchfield.*—*Pope in Kemble's characters.*—*Family Quarrels.*—*The Jews.*—*Mrs. Siddons disturbed in Ireland.*—*Dublin Lying-in Hospital.*—*Her letter to F. E. Jones.*—*Holcroft's Hear both Sides.*—*Capt. Caulfield's Hamlet.*—*Ranger.*—*Dimond's Hero of the North.*—*Colman's John Bull.*—*Its merits.*—*A Monodrame.*—*Death of Mr. Richardson.*—*Singular conduct of Sheridan.*—*Mrs. Pope, the second, dies.*—*Summer Theatre.*—*Charles Matthews.*—*Mrs. Wiggins.*—*Allingham.*—*Colman's Epilogue to the Maid of Bristol.*—*Astley's Amphitheatre again burnt.*

The departure of Mr. Kemble from Drury Lane Theatre, with the consequent loss of the other members of his family, threw an almost impenetrable cloud over his future destiny. Every thing seemed to indicate unavoidable ruin. Mrs. Siddons had gone to Ireland. Mr. Charles Kemble still remained, and very awkward it was to remain, in a concern where his duty compelled him to serve a cause, which his family were considered to have deserted. With all his temper and prudence many things must have occasionally reached his ear, not calculated by any delicacy for such a hearer.

My pleasant friend, John Bannister, undertook the stage department, for which he was exceedingly well qualified; and in some way or other, how can only be accounted for by the *Mania*, which a theatre excites, and so seldom cures, Mr. Graham the magistrate, seated himself at the head of a board of management; the other four members, I think, interfered but little. Dramatic productions were read and considered by Mr. Graham; and, what was of greater importance to

their authors, his checks upon the house of Hammersley were *frequently* paid without difficulty.

"Magnus ab integro . . . . nascitur ordo."

Among the accessions to this company were Dwyer, who was a very passable Belcour, and Cherry, who, as an actor, was the best substitute for King, and sometimes Dodd, that modern times have seen, until Mr. W. Farren, who probably never saw King, returned him to us "renewed in all his strength, and fresh with life." It gives no common pleasure to pay this passing compliment to the son of my old friend. After long experience in the school of studious and finished acting, I pronounce this gentleman to be *really* an ARTIST. He sees every thing in a character; he neglects nothing in his preparation of it, internal or external; a few more such men, with their *whole* minds in the profession, and we might be stopped in the descent of the art, and find it as intelligent as it will always be amusing.

On the 27th of September, at the other theatre, Mr. Cooke ventured to perform what he chose to think Hamlet. I am pretty conversant with the text of Shakspeare, original and derived. I know the creeping infusion of Hanmer's *particles*, and the daring *alterations* of Warburton's lofty confidence. I also know the almost incredible ignorance of our ancient language, common to all the early commentators. But such a text as Mr. Cooke then spoke in the part of Hamlet, I never yet read, and doubt whether it can be found in print. George Steevens used to talk about the town, Harry Row, the trumpeter's edition of Macbeth, and a delicious thing I see it is, now lying before me. But Cooke's Hamlet was the greater effort. His "definement suffered entire perdition—it was not possible to understand him in a mother tongue." "Now this," —stretching beyond poor Cooke, to all actors and to all times,—"is villanous." It is not coxcomry, it is neglectful impudence, or insulting ignorance. To be perfect in the words, is always in the power of humble diligence. I have seen, in this duty of the performer, such a man as Claremont shame an actor of twenty pounds a week. The great actor may here say, "look at the comparative length of our respective characters." I do so; and merely add, that the lower actor, through the season, probably performs TWENTY different parts in tragedy, comedy, opera, and farce, for the great man's one. But the audience should cure this: they would if they were as well acquainted with their authors as the

French are. How Mr. Cooke *acted* Hamlet is now not worth talking about. It is quite useless to look into the detail of one mass of awkward error,—besides to the *natural* admirers of *ungraceful* men, I should expatiate in vain; no "euphrasy* or rue" will purge their visual faculty. To the cultivated I have said enough.

Drury Lane this season had no slight acquisition in Collins, from the Southampton Theatre, an actor not unlike that exquisite rustic Blanchard, of Covent Garden, whose ploughboy will long "whistle o'er the lea," in the ear of the true lover of the art. Stephen Kemble, too, came again to town, and presented in, perhaps, rather more than person, a *natural* Falstaff. He jested, in a prologue written by himself, with *his* "huge hill of flesh," and Bannister, who delivered it, was often cheered by excessive laughter. But the reader shall judge of the excitement by a few lines.

> "Upon the *northern* coast by chance we caught him,
> And hither in a *broad-wheel'd waggon* brought him;
> For in a *chaise* the varlet ne'er could enter,
> And no *mail-coach* on such a fare would venture."

If he should be deficient in the wit and humour of the part:

> "He then to better men will leave his *sack*,
> And go, as *ballast*, in a collier back,"

The impression upon my mind is that the *natural* bulk on the stage distresses with an unlucky association of *disease*; and that the *mad-up* knight is the only agreeable Sir John. Mr. Stephen Kemble was a man of reading, and an actor of vigour and firmness. His voice was loud and overpowering, and sometimes, in course, deficient in modulation. He was, perhaps, best at the Boar's Head, after the robbery—though he was good also at Shrewsbury, displayed the flimsy texture of *honour* with much discrimination, and claimed the reward of Percy's death in a novel mode, that drew down repeated thunders of applause. His Falstaff brought several excellent houses.

On the 18th of October, while rehearsing the part of Sapling, in a new comedy by Reynolds, called *Delays and Blunders*, Mr. Lewis, in the last act, suddenly stopped and seemed to be struck by apoplexy. He uttered a sort of shriek, whirled round as if giddy, and dropped upon the stage in a fit. He was first bled in the arm, but without the smallest

* "The herb *eyebright*, and the herb of *grace*."

effect; Dr. Kennedy, and my poor friend, Wilson, were soon at his side, and by cupping they at length relieved the head, to which there had been noticeable, early in the day, a strong determination of the blood. I do not know a more disagreeable service than attending in winter time, a stage rehearsal; the bleak currents of air that assail you in all directions, are, I believe, extremely injurious; and against this, from the nature of the place, no remedy can be provided.

The first considerable effort of the new management of Drury, was the revival of Kane O'Hara's Midas. Their machinist, by a false stage, took up his celestials in a very magnificent way; and by the help of good singing from Kelly, Sedgwick, and Dignum, and the ladies, Mountain, little Bland, and the still less Tyrer (Mrs. Liston), with Suett in Midas, the piece prospered exceedingly.

Lewis being recovered from his very alarming attack, on the 30th of October, *Delays and Blunders* appeared for the first time at Covent Garden. The serious incidents were in the true German taste. The *murder* of a father-in-law—an expected *trial* for the murder to open the play, and the confinement of a lady on a false accusation of *lunacy*. But I am quite sure such incidents must have been as uncomfortable to my gay friend as they could have been to any devoted admirer of Farquhar; (no one indeed more so than *himself*;) and that he cursed his compliance with the rage until the moment of counting his profits. To venture upon any detail, how his comic incidents were combined with all this criminal horror, is quite impossible—he, however, in compliment to his father's profession, *invented* an honest attorney, and Paul Postpone, in the hands of Fawcett, produced the six and eight-pences in the seasonable number. A sprig of nobility, Lord Orlando de Courcy, was cut away from the piece on the second night, and a wretched epilogue by Mrs. Mattocks, was *brayed* down by an ass in the gallery, to the infinite delight of the pit and boxes. A few tags, therefore, at the end of the play, were spoken afterwards by six of the characters, and the piece rose nightly in reputation, though not, if I remember, to Reynolds's *first* rank of praise.

The 13th of November was to be marked with a permanent acquisition in Holcroft's Tale of Mystery. The *dumb* eloquence of Farley, and the *energy* of H. Johnstone, operating upon a really interesting French story, with some very speaking music by Dr. Busby rendered this *melo-drame* one of the most powerful things of its class.

As the term *melo-drame* then affectedly burst upon us from the French, and no precise idea seemed attached to the compound,

I shall throw away at worst but a line or two, upon some kind of explanation. The Greek word ΜΕΛΟΣ (mélos) is a synonime with *membrum;* and therefore used to signify *carmen*, a song of regular parts, or recurring measures: but it is hazardous to interpret a French usage by the aid of our lexicons. As to the melo-drame, therefore, we may be still thankful for the explanation which that acute critic Geoffroy has left us. "A melo-drame, (says he,) is an *opera* in prose, which is merely *spoken;* and in which music discharges the duty of *valet de chambre*, because her office is simply to announce the actors."

On the 17th, the French furnished Mr. Cobb with *la maison a vendre*, a musical farce, acted at Drury Lane, under the same title, "A House to be Sold:"—and thus the bill of the day, stuck upon the walls of the theatre, was visibly called "a fraud upon the stamp office," a public "advertisement" for sale, that paid no *duty*. As a not infrequent sequel, crowds of people went in to *see* the house, but nobody could be found to *buy* it.

Mrs. Litchfield, on the 19th, broke away, alike from modern comi-tragedy and tragi-comedy, and acted the Widow Brady in a style of the greatest excellence. Her tone was inimitably true, and in *spirit*, I thought her very near indeed to Mrs. Crawford herself.

Pope, this year, sustained what very few actors would have dared, and came with credit from the attempt. He acted *Leon*, and *Leontes*, and the *Abbè l'Epèe*, after Mr. Kemble, upon the very site of that great man's triumphs. It would be insulting to say that he approached his predecessor: it would be unjust not to mention, that he was greatly and properly applauded.

On the 15th of December, after acting Shylock, S. Kemble, in the dress of Falstaff, took his leave of the town, in a second address written by himself; and ended with the warm wish that the audience, passing over his imperfections, might say, at his departure,

"We could have better spared a better man."

On the 18th of this month, T. Dibdin's comic opera, called Family Quarrels, met with a very stormy reception: Fawcett, in the character of Proteus, becomes a Jew and sells slippers with the "patient shrug" of the peculiar people. It was Saturday, and Braham sang in the opera, two good reasons for gathering the Hebrews together: a day on which they dare not *work* seems, at its close, allowably, to terminate in

play. There might be some hint given abroad that they were to be served up to contempt, and Argus no sooner puts his eye upon the presumed Jew, than he exclaims, "I never have any *dealings* with your people." Here was indeed a *vital* attack, an injury upon the back of an insult.

The very great address of Fawcett, who was sent on; his *general* particularity—his "*that* part" of the audience; "*any* part" of the audience: his mode of letting them understand that Dibdin, in rather a complimentary way, had been to Duke's place before—all really offered a high treat at the time; and he had carried his point but that some of those horrible brochures, called *Books of the Songs*, with their usual grammar and point, and print, had fallen into the hands of the Christians, Jerusalem was *not* to be delivered.

There was a song in this mass of waste-paper, which Fawcett went off without singing; the reason was, that it would have been throwing oil upon fire. The Christians *read* it in their glimmering studies, and bursting with laughter at its jokes, roared vociferously for its delivery, that they might enjoy the torture of the Jews. Fawcett told them *why* he had omitted it, but if they insisted upon having it, he was ready to obey their pleasure. Accordingly he sang it, and was *charitably* encored. Effectually trodden down and vanquished, all opposition was at length silenced on the part of the poor Jews; who amid long ages of persecution, can find little that is consolatory to their feelings, except the comedy of Cumberland, which bears their name, and, I *hope*, records their virtue.

The music of this opera, by various composers, was often beautiful; but the piece itself, I thought, even in its very humour, below the pitch of Dibdin's ready and whimsical mind.

I have already stated that Mrs. Siddons went to Ireland, upon the family retirement from Drury Lane Theatre. It was this lady's fate to be continually assailed on the same ground—*want of liberality*. The reader remembers the old persecution of her as to performers' benefits. She had been violently accused, this winter, of refusing her aid to a public charity, the Dublin Lying-in Hospital. The trustees of that institution publicly contradicted the calumny, in a way that ought to have been satisfactory; they said, "Mrs. Siddons had most certainly never *refused* to act for them, and, indeed, had never been requested to do so." However, something as to her having been expected to act for *one* of the public charities of that kingdom, is admitted by Mrs. Siddons herself; whose perfect vindication it were cruel either to omit or

curtail, as it does credit to her name and character. I therefore preserve her letter to the Irish manager, Jones.

"SIR, *Dublin, Dec.* 8, 1802.

"I TAKE the liberty of addressing you on a subject which has caused me much uneasiness. Public censure is, under any circumstances, well calculated to wound our feelings, but it is peculiarly distressing when it is heightened by injustice. That reports, most injurious to me, have been circulated, can no longer be doubted, when I assure you that I understand it is generally believed that I refused to play for the Lying-in Hospital. On this subject, you will, I am sure, be as anxious to do me justice, as I am solicitous to vindicate myself in the eyes of the public. I therefore beg leave to bring to your recollection, that you did me the honour of calling on me, at my house in Park-street, last summer, when it was liberally proposed on your part, as it was most cheerfully accepted on mine, that I should perform for some charity. You also recollect, that it was considered by us both as a compliment justly due to Lady Hardwicke, that she should have the *choice* of the particular charity for which I was to perform; and you thought it likely that her excellency would give her preference to the Lying-in Hospital. You also, sir, must remember, that I was not only willing, but desirous, of exerting myself for the benefit of so laudable an institution.

"Why so amiable a purpose was not immediately promoted, I cannot even guess; but sure I am, that its postponement cannot be attributed to any backwardness on my part. The same motives which actuated me then, are no less powerful now; and it will give me infinite pleasure, if, by the exertion of any powers I possess, I can be able to promote an important object of public utility.

"And now, sir, if I may be permitted to speak of myself as a private individual, I have only to regret the sad necessity imposed upon me of vindicating my character from the imputation of a failing as unamiable as, I trust, it is foreign to my nature. I regret that I should be constrained, from unfortunate circumstances to endeavour to rescue myself from an obloquy, which, I hope, I have never incurred by my conduct. I regret that the country in which I am obliged to do so should be Ireland.

"I have the honour to be, sir,
Your obedient servant,
(Signed) S. SIDDONS."

"*To Frederick Edward Jones, esq.*".

The great actress had speedily a real affliction to sustain; when she wrote the above letter she was unacquainted with the death of her father, which occurred two days before the date of it. The reader will find a communication of that event to Mr. Kemble while upon his travels, and his very affecting commemoration of his virtues.

"Fashion," said the best writer of comic prologues, "in every thing bears sovereign sway;" Reynolds, in October, had started that black swan, an honest attorney; and Holcroft, with his usual feeling as to *innovations*, determined to bring him into full practice: by the 29th of January he exhibited his friend Fairfax, in a comedy properly named Hear *both* Sides. Our lawyer is assailed throughout four acts by a storm of execration from the very miserable victims of his persecution. He hears the charges with anger, and threatens ample revenge. At the proper moment, he calls his accusers together, and solemnly puts himself upon his trial, when it evidently appears that he had been all the time deliberately and wisely labouring for the *benefit* of those, whom superficially he had seemed to *injure*. No doubt exists of the perfect propriety of acquitting the *honnete criminel*, and amazement settles in grateful affection. But though well acted, it was not relished by the audience; indeed it was somewhat carelessly written.

> "His TRUTH was too *stale*, or too *feeble* his FICTION,
> And they could not endure his *anomalous* DICTION."
>
> MAUSOL.

It is very seldom indeed, that I have considered myself warranted to intrude any *amateur* performances upon the notice of my readers, but the debût of a Captain Caulfield, of the guards, on the 2d of February, at Covent Garden, in the character of Hamlet, merits something in the way of exception. Acting is an art that must be practised, as well as a science that must be studied. Captain Caulfield had in private diligently applied himself, and had acquired much of the theory and the practice. His fault arose out of his profession. He had probably accustomed himself to consider those "who berattle the common stages" as vulgars, and conceived a something more *exquisite*, as required to denote either the gentleman or the prince. In consequence he fell under the censure of Hamlet himself.

"*Ham.*—He did comply with his dug, before he sucked it. Thus has he, and many more of the same breed, that I know the drossy age dotes on, only got the tune of the time, and outward habit of encounter; a kind of

yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fond and winnowed opinions." Act 5. sc. ii.

Captain Caulfield accordingly was the most "curled darling," the genteelest thing in nature; always in attitudes, and merely shifting from one elegance of personal display to another. In certain society this display of himself had excited peculiar admiration, and his admirers cherished the best hopes of his public excellence; but though he was occasionally animated and correct, and even impressive, the powers of voice seemed to fail under any protracted exertion, and he therefore tried next the character of *Ranger*, that his gay gentility might carry him through at a smaller expense of the lungs. But to the general astonishment, as a rake he was only the modern substitute, a *fribble*, and being found *flat* and *spiritless*, the mantling of his theatric honours soon ceased; and I have no pleasure in following him into a retirement of difficulty, from which at all events his merits as an actor were not strong enough to deliver him.

On the 19th of February. Mr. William Dimond, son of the patentee of the Bath and Bristol theatres, brought out at Drury Lane Theatre, an historical play with music, of the Colman cast, called the Hero of the North. His interest was nearly the same with that of Brooke's Gustavus Vasa, except that it was treated with less of tragic gloom, and unvaried blank verse, and shared in the now preferred features of the romantic drama. Our young author had derived the usual intricacy of dilemma, from the celebrated instance in Mr. Puff's tragedy. Gustavus menaces a fort garrisoned by Carlowitz and his Danes. The besieged bring out to execution Gunilda, the sister of Gustavus—that hero resiles from the test—now is the lady's turn for heroism, and 'egad she refuses life on such conditions. Your Danes, enraged, in course, at what they ought to admire, are about to plunge their daggers into her breast, when Carlowitz, who has broken from his allegiance, yet retains a nobleness of soul, commands them to *deliver* her, and trust to their own courage for defence. Gustavus is not a man to be thus *virtuously* braved, and he immediately volunteers a personal conflict with Carlowitz. This palpable hit throws the rebel upon his knees in penitence, and in its result seats our Hero of the North upon the throne of Sweden.

But let me say that as a spectacle, it was exceedingly picturesque; that its sentiments were glowing, and its interest varied and well mixed together; and that neither

the ear nor the eye had cause to disdain the Hero of the North.

The Gustavus of Brooke had one astonishing effect, when in the year 1805, sixty-six years after its production, it was licensed by the Lord Chamberlain,—it absolutely *unsealed* the eyes of Master Betty's admirers. His failure in Gustavus was the more astonishing, because, though frequently at that time grossly *ignorant*, he certainly never in his action wanted SPIRIT.

On the 5th of March, Covent Garden Theatre exhibited the most popular of Mr. Colman's plays, John Bull. It seized upon general admiration as by a charm, and has held it as by a patent. Of a play so well known it is useless to detail the incidents. The fable is excessively slight: Peregrine lands, like Hamlet, from a shipwreck, and produces all the ensuing events. *He* delivers the daughter—*He* enriches her father—*He* supplants his younger brother Sir Simon, and secures, consequently, his son for the brazier's daughter. The *denouement* of this piece is therefore its opening; and every following event distinctly foreseeen. But it would have been difficult for the author's most intimate friend to foresee the unbounded humour with which *Muckslush* heath overflows—the *triple brass* of Job Thornberry—the energy of his great scene. The pathos, moral efficacy, the character, the contrast, which, from the rise of the curtain to its fall, press continually upon you, leave a doubt whether at any exhibition you were ever made wiser, or better, or happier.

There is only one *indecorum* of which, to a prudent man or a politician, the temper of the times might have suggested the impolicy—the exhibition of a magistrate who refused to do *justice*. However rare such instances (and I sincerely believe them to be rare), in periods of popular delusion, every aspersion upon the seat from which coercion is to proceed is eagerly caught at, and by analogy applied to cases highly dissimilar. *He* has read the trials of some of our reformers to little purpose, who has not observed that, according to the *nerve* of the person, they all strive to throw the greatest odium upon the BENCH; to represent its very convictions as any thing but convictions of the understanding; as the compromise that *place* makes with *power;* as the dread to unsettle inveterate *prejudice* and *error*, in the apprehension that tyranny itself may fall when its base gives way.

As to the mere incident of the play to which I have alluded, if Mr. Colman knew such laxity of principle to exist, it was certainly competent to him to administer the moral corrective of the drama. He was not at that time licenser! had he

filled the chair of old Larpent, I will do him the justice to say, that I think he would have decided more justly, where he was himself a party, than he has made Sir Simon Rochdale do.

Incidentally I just notice, that Munden refused to act the character just named, because Fawcett's was a better part. He therefore conferred a treasure upon that valuable actor, Blanchard, who has played it twenty years together, and gained infinite credit by the ability which he has shown in it. I will preserve the original cast of John Bull: it was gloriously acted.

Peregrine,	Mr. Cooke.
Sir Simon Rochdale,	Blanchard.
F. Rochdale,	H. Johnston.
Lord Fitz-Balaam,	Waddy.
Hon. T. Shuffleton,	Lewis.
Job Thornberry,	Fawcett.
Dan,	Emery.
Dennis Brulgruddery,	J. Johnstone.
Lady Car. Braymore,	Mrs. H. Johnston.
Mrs. Brulgruddery,	Davenport.
Mary Thornberry,	Gibbs.

Johnstone sang a very whimsical Epilogue, written by the author of the comedy, to an old Irish tune: it was *encored*.

Mrs. Litchfield, on the 22d of this month, undertook, for Monk Lewis, the performance of what he called, properly enough, a monodrame, which, under the title of the *Captive*, exhibited, in one act, an accumulation of horrors, caught from the Lazarhouse of Milton,

> "Demoniac phrenzy, moping melancholy,
> And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy.
> Dire was the tossing, deep the groans, despair
> Tended the sick busiest from couch to couch."

The actress was so powerful in this scene of miseries, that several ladies fainted; and the German taste of the author received the proper reproof from the better feeling of his countrymen.

The author just mentioned, who "supped full with horrors" on all occasions, dressed up for the benefit of his friends, the Johnstons, his translation of Schiller's Minister, which he now called the Harper's Daughter. Cooke was to have acted in it, but he chose to quit the cabinet, and afforded H. Siddons an opportunity to distinguish himself in a very disgusting, but certainly powerful subject.

On the 9th of June, Mr. Richardson, one of the proprie-

tors of Drury Lane, died from the effects of a ruptured blood-vessel. I formerly touched with regret upon the early close of a life, that might, under a change of habits, have been highly useful, as it was certainly ornamental. I noticed that he had his full share in the classical pleasantries of his time. He was a contributor, with Ellis and Dr. Lawrence, to the Rolliad and Probationary Odes. My pleasant and constant friend through life, Mr. Taylor, knew Richardson well before the spell of Sheridan took hold upon him; and has fondly described him to me as one of the gayest spirits about town. A man of lively imagination, great reading, sound judgment, and possessing an almost unerring perception of character.

Richardson once said a strong thing of Sheridan: "It was his sincere conviction, that could some enchanter's wand touch him into the possession of fortune, he would instantly convert him into a being of the nicest honour, and most unimpeachable moral excellence." Riches are so often quoted as the corrupters of our nature, that I could not suppress even a *fancy* of their moral efficacy.

Sheridan had for Richardson all the affection that a careless man can have for any thing. He made a point, therefore, of going down to Egham, to see the last offices performed over his remains. Mr. Taylor says, they arrived too late by about a quarter of an hour. The clergyman had just retired from the grave. Sheridan was in an agony of grief at this disappointment; but his powerful *name* properly enforced upon the rector, procured a polite and humane repetition of the close of the service, to enable the tardy orator to say that he had attended the funeral of his friend.

The party dined together at the Inn, and after the cloth was removed, their kindness for the deceased broke forth in *designed* testimonials to his merits. Dr. Combe was to choose the kind of stone for his mausoleum, and Sheridan himself undertook to compose a suitable inscription; but no curious stone ever covered his remains, and the promised inscription never was written. Such are the hasty pledges of recent grief, and the performances of indolent genius.

Mr. Richardson, by the kindness and munificence of the late Duke of Northumberland and other friends, had been enabled to purchase a quarter of the Drury Lane concern: and his widow and daughters in vain tried to obtain, from the late Mr. Whitbread, some compensation for the property so unfortunately embarked: but his constant reply was, that he really had not *nerve* enough to go into the consideration of the claim; and a few renters' shares that nobody would buy, and some trifling situation in the wardrobe, was all that about 38,000*l.*

ever produced to his family. On the weekly pay-list of the theatre, Sheridan's name stands charged with a regular 31*l.* 10*s.*; Richardson's, 15*l.* 15*s.*; Tom. Sheridan's 6*l.* 10*s.*; and Grubb's, 9*l.*

There was yet another loss to this theatre during the month of June; that very interesting woman and elegant actress, Mrs. Pope, was seized, while acting Desdemona, with an apoplectic fit on the night of the 10th, and died on the 18th of the month. She had acted Monimia, in Dublin, at the early age of 17, on the 17th of February, 1790; in 1797 she was greatly admired, at Covent Garden Theatre, in the same beautiful character, and Mr. Pope married her in the year following. Mr. Shee's portrait of her. in Juliet, is a very perfect likeness of her figure and expression. It is engraved.

I am now to notice the experiment made by Colman, at the summer theatre, to form and continue a company, independent of the winter houses; to review the valuable talents that he brought forth, and to introduce to the London public the very peculiar powers of my young friend, Charles Matthews, a man whose genius has made him, one way, the rival of Foote, and the most attractive name among us. Colman was not a man likely, in a reasonable design, to want supporters. In the present, he found the highest and the best. The late King honoured him with a command on his second night. He had one very considerable auxiliary in Elliston, who accepted the stage management, and secured to himself the possession, as an actor, of every part, serious or comic, that he chose to play. Chapman, from Worcester, proved to be a sensible, and steady speaker. But his farcical prop was Charles Matthews, from the York company, the son of a bookseller in the Strand. His father, I think, was a dissenting teacher, in one of the *mille et une* sects, in which *pride*, under the name of *conscience*, leads men to abjure at least the *forms* of the established church. What sectarists in general think of theatres, is commonly understood. I dare say old Matthews thought the stage mania of his son an ample punishment for all the sins with which he was able to charge himself.

What Charles carried away with him from this town into the country was little beyond a *love* of mimicry. What I saw of his youthful *acting* really alarmed me for his welfare. I knew, however, that little is refused to devoted labour, and the perseverance of a man in a pursuit which he loves; he probably benefitted by the obstructions to his advancement. Incledon told me, that he found him in Ireland in the most distressing state that could be imagined. It strikes me that Matthews actually formed himself, in a great degree, upon the eccentric

Tate Wilkinson. In the York company, he certainly laid the foundations of that comic versatility, which, in the most rapid changes of voice and manner, and even personal appearance, made him master of the *whole surface* of life at an early period of his own. Studies of a peculiar kind, the employment of his leisure, have at length given *mind* to the external mass; and perhaps, either as to *thought* or *action*, the infinite diversities of human nature find in Matthews "a glass that features them," and from him might be securely estimated the greater as well as less features of either national or local peculiarity.

On Colman's first night, he acted the meagre Jabal, in Cumberland's Jew, and followed it by Lingo, in the Agreeable Surprise. Matthews was a nervous man, and like the class, too much in a hurry to be rid of what he felt embarrassing; but there was enough drollery in his manner to render him at first a diverting, and soon a favourite actor.

The influence obtained by Mr. Colman at the palace, on the present trial, may be judged of by the immediate appearance of their majesties this season; nine years having passed away, without a single visit, since the melancholy accident at their last command, on the 3d of February, 1794.

Mrs. Goodall, the Floranthe of the Mountaineers, when Kemble performed Octavian, returned to the Haymarket, on the 19th of the month, to act with the younger strength of Elliston, and the company wore an appearance of duration. Mrs. Gibbs, in herself, was no slight attraction.

The farce of Mrs. Wiggins, on the 27th, gave Matthews an opportunity of convulsing the audience with laughter, in the character of a bloated country gentleman, who, running away from a termagant helpmate, finds it quite impracticable to run from the *name*. Some Mrs. Wiggins or other is for ever bursting upon a moment's quiet. This farce was written by a Mr. Allingham, of whom I know little, but that he diversified his leisure by mechanics, and disdaining the ascending power of *gas*, like the artist in Rasselas, "taught himself the office of a fowl;" and by a very artificial construction of wings, with springs of steel, succeeded sufficiently to break his shins, in fluttering about his apartments like a dab chick.

So happy a commencement was a spur to his invention. He calculated the duration of his strength, and saw that he needed some supplement to the power of his arms. He therefore attached the *balloon* to his apparatus; which, filled with common steam, he imagined capable to sustain his weight, standing in a sort of wooden shoes, so as to leave him no care but the management of his wings. He now appeared, to him-

self, to have combined a principle of government along with the ascending medium.

> "Thus, with expanded wings, he steer'd his flight,
> Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,
> That felt unusual weight."
>
> PARADISE LOST.

"Thrice he assayed, and thrice in spite of skill" *burst* his balloons. Poor fellow! the experiments cost him more than two hundred pounds, and the loss of time that, dramatically employed, would have *produced* three times the money. Allingham had yet another distinction—he exchanged shots with a DAILY CRITIC in a turnip-field.

The sequel is melancholy; with an agreeable person, and a jovial temper, he led a life of unthinking gaiety; became dreadfully embarrassed in his circumstances, and died yet young the victim to disease, brought on by intemperance.

The season of 1802-3 had been one of the best that Covent Garden Theatre had ever known; and against Colman's *theatre*, they acted his *John Bull* to the 23d of June, their last night. A rough estimate carried the profits of Mr. Harris to 30,000*l.*

But notwithstanding the severe check furnished by his own genius, Colman was now doing very well in his lovely little summer box. Elliston, continued to be attractive in Octavian, Sir Edward Mortimer, Gondibert, St. Pierre, and even Richard III. Under the style of Arthur Griffinhoofe, the manager produced *une folie*, as they called it in Paris, by the title of Love laughs at Locksmiths; and he contributed to Mr. Boaden's Maid of Bristol, an epilogue, which, as far as verse could do, laid bare the atrocious ambition of the Corsican. There was a *nerve* in this composition, that reminded you of the rough vigour of Churchill. In my time no lines spoken on a stage ever produced equal effect. How well he understood his object, WELLINGTON has demonstrated.

> "God! must this mushroom despot of the hour
> The spacious World encircle with his power?
> Forbid it, Heaven! and forbid it, man!
> Can man forbid it? YES:—the ENGLISH CAN."

The Theatres Royal were at this period not so identified with the Amphitheatre of Mr. Astley, as they have since become. They are now the winter stables of his horses, and a change of scene for the noble brutes, who *are* thought able to entertain an enlightened public, and reward the spirit of an enterprising manager. Thus, without feeling a *gratitude*

for which no cause then existed, the historian of the stage records with sincere sorrow the destruction, by fire, of the Amphitheatre, a second time, on the 2d of September, 1803.

A fatal neglect on the part of those, whose duty it was to see every light in the theatre extinguished, allowed some flame or spark to communicate with combustibles collected together for occasional fire-works; and the destruction of the whole premises was known to be inevitable at the first perception of the disaster. Mrs. Woodham, the mother of Mrs. Astley, jun., who slept in an apartment in the front of the house, aged and infirm, perished in the flames. Perhaps, at least forty contiguous houses were consumed in the rapid conflagration. The distress of the sufferers, their shrieks, and the fruitless attempts to save part of their slender property, menaced as much by thieves as by the flames, composed a scene of wretchedness, to which the pecuniary loss of the Astleys, considerable as that appeared to be, was of little moment.* A liberal subscription, or a few successful seasons, may repair the losses of a theatre; but the few articles about the dwellings of the poor are accumulated with difficulty; are the produce often, and the pride of a life of labour; are seldom insured; and the loss of them is an almost hopeless destitution, that "weighs upon the heart," and hastens the already faltering feet to the last abode of infirmity and age.

* The theatre was estimated at 30,000*l.*; little or nothing was insured. The horses, by great address and perseverance, were all saved.

CHAPTER II.

Weekly Salaries in Mr. Kemble's last year at Drury Lane.—Mr. Kemble negotiates, through Mrs. Inchbald, with Mr. Harris.—Sets out on his travels.—His letter from Paris.—Description.—French theatre.—Friends there.—Lord Egremont.—Lord Holland.—Talma.—Napoleon's hat.—Madrid.—La Tyranna.—Letter from Mr. Kemble while at Madrid.—His account of that Capital.—Its population.—Its buildings.—Their theatres.—La Rita Luna.—A bull fight.—How he was accommodated.—Censures of his countrymen.—His own correct feeling.—The death of old Mr. Kemble.—His son's letter on that event.—Filial piety.—Mrs. Kemble, his mother.—His wife's affection and cheerfulness.—How his father's remains should be distinguished.—Advice to his brother Charles.—Returns to England.—Duties of a stage-manager.—Mr. William Lewis.—His daily habits.—Peculiar opinions.—Once a proprietor.—Schism in the theatre.—Mrs. Lewis alarmed.—Relinquishes his sixth share of Covent Garden.—Mr. Kemble purchases.—Value of the property.—And distribution of it.—Improvements of the House.

BEFORE we attend Mr. Kemble upon his travels, it may be worth while to look a little at the arrangements of the theatre which he had just quitted. The scale of expense, as to the performers, was then, at all events, moderate. In our own times engagements have been compulsorily formed between managers and actors, which it may be quite clear the former would never concede, had they a less fearful alternative than absolute ruin or no profit. If they yield to the enormous demands and pay the salaries, they cannot *gain*, with the utmost success—if they resist demands quite wanton and really disproportioned to the talent, they are then certainly ruined, because the public will never follow substitutes of lower powers or prices.

I am, as I ought to be, quite indifferent as to the opinion which may follow my disclosure. Any influence but that of truth and justice, I hope always to disdain. But I confess I have a wish to try, at all events, to save the stage, by recalling the subject to a new and temperate examination. With this view, I publish the following authentic list of the weekly salaries of the

Drury Lane company in the last season of Mr. Kemble's management, 1801-2.

THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE, PAY LIST.

Mr. Kemble*	£56 14	Brought up	£212 14
Bannister	17 0	Mr. Sedgwick	6 0
King	16 0	Powell	6 0
Pope	13 0	Holland	5 0
Kelly	16 0	Caulfield	4 0
Wroughton	15 0	Powell (Prompter)	4 0
Suett	12 0	Dignum	4 0
Dowton	8 0	Cooke	4 0
C. Kemble	10 0	Grimaldi	4 0
Barrymore	10 0	Packer	3 0
Byrne	8 0	Decamp	3 0
R. Palmer	9 0	Twenty-five gentlemen of great or respectable talents, received weekly a total of	£255 14
Wathen	8 0		
Raymond	8 0		
Wewitzer	6 0		
	£212 14		

As to the ladies.

Mrs. Jordan averaged about (During the season of 1804-5 I find she received 1081*l.* 10*s.*)	£31 10	Brought up	£117 10
		Miss Mellon	5 0
		Tyrer	5 0
Mrs. Crouch that year	14 0	Mrs. Harlow	4 0
Reduced the next to 7*l.*		Miss B. Menage	3 0
Miss Decamp	12 0	Hicks	3 0
Mrs. Mountain	12 0	Campbell	3 0
Bland	12 0	Mrs. Sparks	3 0
Pope	11 0	Henry	3 0
Young (*ci-devant* Miss Biggs)	10 0	Sontley	3 0
		Campbell (2d)	3 0
Powell	10 0	Byrne (dancer)	5 0
Ansell	5 0	20 Female performers	£157 10
	£117 10		

All the salaries below 5*l.* per week I purposely omit, that I may not seem to discredit the names of very deserving people.

When Mr. Kemble quitted Drury Lane Theatre, it was decidedly with a view to the purchase of one-sixth of the property of the rival house. The intermediate person was Mrs. Inchbald, who conducted to its close the negotiation between Mr. Harris and himself. Mr. Kemble was not a wealthy man; but he could be at no loss for aid in making the purchase; Mr. Heathcote was anxious to supply what was required on the occasion. In so total a change of interest, the shifting of his scene

* That is, as actor and manager.

of action was judged a matter calling for some interval of preparation. He therefore seized the opportunity of revisiting the continent, in the company of his very dear friend, Mr. R. Heathcote; and ever "bearing a wary eye" to what might contribute to the perfection of the English stage, he determined not only to inspect the improvements of our polite neighbours, but to visit the Spanish theatre, which in the cast of its drama bore a closer affinity to our own.

The reader shall, however, have the satisfaction of reading Mr. Kemble's own account of the principal features of his tour; and, if I mistake not, the great actor will become endeared to him from the unaffected excellence of the man. The first letter which I shall communicate, was written from Paris to his brother Charles; it is extremely characteristic of his feeling and sincerity.

Paris, July 23, 1802.

"My dear Charles,

"How does my mother do? Is she in the country, or does she prefer staying in town? Tell me every thing about her health, and give my duty to her and to my father.

"After a circuit, Lille, Douai, and Arras, I arrived here safe and sound a few days ago. You know, perhaps, that we were detained a whole week at Lord Guilford's, who was inexpressibly kind to us, by poor Heathcote's illness. Every thing in Douai is in a state of ruin, poverty, and desolation not to be described. I had not the heart to go up to my old room. The neighbours, with whom I talked, have a notion that the English are coming back, and are overjoyed when they tell you so.

"This place (Paris) is such a scene of magnificence, filth, pleasure, poverty, gaiety, distress, virtue and vice, as constitutes a greater miracle than was ever chronicled in history. The plays I have seen are, Iphigenie en Aulide, by Racine; Oreste, by Voltaire; La Mere Coupable, by Beaumarchais; and a farce or two. I will not pretend to say any thing of the actors or the theatres, till I have seen a little more of them. Talma and I are grown very well acquainted; he seems an agreeable man. Last night I was presented to Contat, who is not what she was. I know Michot, Fleury, Dazincourt, Baptiste, and one or two more of the Comedie Française, a little. I should have told you, that I have seen l'Abbé de l'Epée. Monvel acts the Abbé as well as possible; the other characters were very much inferior to the English. There cannot be a more kind reception than I meet with here. My Lord Egremont, Lord and Lady Holland, who live most splendidly, insist on our dining

with them every day, and with one or the other we do dine every day, and then you know comes the spectacle.

"I have promised Talma to procure a copy of Pizarro, that he may see whether it can be adapted to the French stage. Buy a book of it, make it up in separate packets, and send it me by the next post. I am afraid they will not be able to turn it to any use. Texier told me he would give me a letter or two to some persons of his acquaintance here, who he thought might be useful and pleasant to a stranger. Pray upbraid him with having forgot me. He may send them still, if he pleases. God bless you, my boy! Don't forget to tell me how you do, and be sure to remember all the news. You are to direct to me, Hôtel de Courland, Place de la Concorde, Paris. Remember me to every body I ought to remember.

Yours, J. P. KEMBLE.

When we came afterwards to talk over the French theatre together, he frankly confessed that their mode of acting tragedy did not please him. There can be little doubt, that much of their former grand style had disappeared, like all other greatness, in the progress of their revolution. La Clairon, late in life, wrote her complaint of the vulgarity of action and the carelessness of pronunciation, on the modern stage. She had lived to hear the quantity of the verse sadly misconceived, from the deficiency of grammmatical studies; and the measured beauty of diction sacrificed to those fiery bursts of passion, which bore no proportion whatever to the actual sentiment of the poet.

Mr. Kemble was indeed received warmly in Paris. But my friend was a genuine Englishman, and little likely to answer that demand of *display*, that is so natural to a Frenchman. The Parisians accordingly wondered at his silence—he appeared to them thoughtful and reserved; but they admired the grace of his manners, and were charmed with the courtesy which so brightened the expression of a countenance essentially tragic. Among other complimentary things, the Parisians thought Mr. Kemble wonderfully like the grand Bonaparte in countenance; the representative of the greatest of the Romans had an opportunity of remarking the restless action of Napoleon, and by no means saw, or endeavoured to persuade himself that he perceived, any external indications of that powerful character, which predominated over all the sanguinary factions of France. He told me that one of Napoleon's hats was presented to him, that he might judge of the comparative capacity of their heads; but this is, indeed, high matter, and as it would be impossible to exhaust the subject in any given number of volumes, it shall occupy no greater space in the present.

It had often formed a topic of our conversation, that when Mr. Kemble got to Madrid, he would inquire what could now be told of a prodigy of whom Mr. Cumberland speaks in his life. That agreeable writer describes an actress, called La Tyranna, of whose caprice he gives many instances, and one of them, as may be imagined, flattering to himself. She let him know when she fancied herself "in the vein" to exhibit her full tragic power, and literally overwhelmed him with astonishment at the dreadful energies she possessed; and then complacently enjoyed the wonder and the sympathy she had raised. Considerable time, however, had now elapsed, and Mr. Kemble could hear nothing from the actors of Madrid of this *terrible* ornament of their profession; but he was himself *almost* as fortunate as Mr. Cumberland had been; as will be seen by the following extract from one of his letters, which, however, I shall not confine to that subject, but allow the reader all that is not of a private nature in the communication.

"After wishing you many, many new years, each happier than that which went before it, I will give you the satisfaction of knowing, that I am safe and well here, after only two overturns on the way. I believe you know all the places I have seen a great deal better than I do; yet of Madrid I will tell you, that it is a village to any one who has lived in London. —A town that you may easily walk round in an hour and a half, and whose population does not probably exceed a hundred and fifty thousand souls, does not convey a very lofty idea of the metropolis of a great monarchy. Seen from some points, however, this village, as I have ventured to call it, is beautiful, and even magnificent. The old spires and towers of the convents and churches, the gay fronts of the public buildings, and the mansions of the nobility, give it at once an air of gaiety and grandeur. I speak only of four or five particular streets; for the rest of them, in general, are too narrow for carriages to pass each other without danger; and they are latterly grown so dirty, that I wonder, considering the intolerable heat of their summers, that the plague is not as common here as at Constantinople.

"There are here two theatres. Senor Mayques, who manages that called *Los Canos del Peral*, has been in France; he is an intelligent actor, and certainly the best in the company. In this theatre they principally act translations of French comedies and vaudevilles. In the other, that called *de la Cruz*, an actress, who is styled La Senora Rita Luna, by her sole and superior merit sustains the fame of the old and celebrated authors of Spain. The discernment and natural good taste of

this lady show to her with exactness the idea of the character she has to represent. Her countenance, from the amazing flexibility of her features, displays every thing that passes in her mind. The action of ordinary performers fails simply because they know not how to dispose of their lifeless frames: that of la Rita Luna adds the most speaking graces to a voice so musical, that, in Spanish expression, her mouth might be styled the shell of Apollo. In a word, I have only seen one actress to whom I think la Rita Luna inferior in the art. Highly distinguished as she is by Melpomene, la Rita Luna is yet more decidedly a favourite of Thalia; and she told me herself, that she never, with perfect good will, set herself about any tragic studies. But it is difficult to conceive how that can be done reluctantly, which is so transcendent.*

"You know what bustle they keep in England about the pride, pomp, and circumstance of a Spanish bull-fight; by the best good luck in the world there has been one since I came to Madrid; it is exactly like all the rest of the exaggerated descriptions of too many travellers. I do assure you, that it is so far from being a splendid or interesting spectacle, that if I lived in Spain for the rest of my life, I hardly believe I should have the least desire to see another.

"The King and Queen are expected to return to Aranjuez in the course of next week, when the greatest part of the immense train of the nobility, who have attended their Majesties in their tour, will, it is supposed, be very well contented to come back to their own houses, and restore some spirit to Madrid, which, they say here, is very dull for want of them. If they would bring some *fire*, as well as spirit, with them, I should be among the foremost to bid them welcome. Will you believe it? I am in what is called a very good lodging, and am at this present writing hereof absolutely freezing. What do you think of the month of January, and colder than it is in London, joined with a great square bare white-washed room, and not a possibility of having a morsel of fire? There is hardly such a thing as a chimney in Madrid, and the pans of charcoal, over which the Spaniards crouch and coddle themselves, turn me so sick in ten minutes, that I dare not go near them. There is no such thing as a window-shutter, that closes within half a foot—and the frames gape so wide from all the doors, that you may almost walk into any apartment, without the trouble of opening them.

"Well, never mind all this. I like the Spaniards very much,

* The passage relative to the theatres, Mr. Kemble wrote in the Spanish language, which he was learning diligently at the time. He read the authors currently before he left England.

and shall be glad, as long as I live, that I have seen them. The French have managed matters so as to be a good deal unpopular in Spain: the English, on the contrary, are in high favour; and would be received every where on a footing more easy and familiar even than they already are, were it not that the Spanish gentry are a little out of humour, and, indeed, I must say, not unreasonably, with some of our countrymen, who, after having been most hospitably admitted to their tables, parties, &c. have acted more like spies than liberal travellers, by ridiculing, in their publications, those manners and customs for the knowledge of which they were beholden to that GENEROSITY, which ought to have made its errors *sacred* from their MOCKERY."

Such is the close of my admirable friend's letter. Such was the high and gentlemanly feeling of his mind, and his practice through life was in the most strict and rigorous conformity. In the unthinking levity of youth, how prone are we all to show our folly in our criticism, and to mock at customs of which we know not the origin, and manners that may differ even for the better from our own. We have of late been excited to a perfect storm of indignation by the writings of sundry foreigners, who have published their observations upon our national and social manners. It were unjust to infer more malignity in the travellers of other countries than in our own: equal mistake may be candidly allowed; and the necessity of longer observation and deeper knowledge may at last silence the cravings of the press itself, and limit our foreign travels to what is CERTAINLY TRUE, and also PROPER TO BE TOLD.

I have thus exhibited Mr. Kemble as an amiable and intelligent traveller, and I hope demonstrated the soundness of his personal character. While he was in Madrid, his brother Charles had the melancholy task of informing him of their father's death. I have before mentioned his dutiful and cordial manners to his parents, and I have little doubt that the following touching expression of his feelings under the loss he had sustained will be thought by most readers the brightest page of his life. When his brother Charles read over to me the various letters in his possession, that I might select such as I should think of *public* interest, I did not find one in the whole collection in which a wise, a moral public, had a deeper interest than in this natural record of the good man's sorrows.

"*Madrid, December* 31, 1802.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"How sincerely I always loved my father, and respected his sound understanding, you know too well for it to be necessary

that I should even mention what I feel this moment on opening your letter. God Almighty receive him into his everlasting happiness! and teach me to be resigned, and resolute to deserve to follow him, when my appointed hour is come. My poor mother, though I know she will exert becoming firmness of mind in this and every passage of her life, cannot but feel a melancholy void in losing the companion of her youth, the associate of her advancing years, and the father of her children. I regret, from the very bottom of my heart, that I cannot with the most dutiful affection assure her at her feet, that what a grateful son can offer and do shall never be wanting from me, to promote her content, and ease, and happiness. How in vain have I delighted myself in thousands of inconvenient occurrences on this journey, with the thought of contemplating my father's cautious incredulity while I related them to him! Millions of things uninteresting, may be, to any body else, I had treasured up for his surprise and scrutiny! It is God's pleasure that he is gone from us—once more, the peace of the just be with him! The resignation I had long observed in him to the will of Heaven, and his habitual piety, are no small consolation to me; yet I cannot help feeling a dejected swelling at my heart, that keeps me in a flood of tears for him in spite of all I can do to stop 'em. Again, God bless him! This is Friday,—there is no post to the North till Tuesday morning.—In a few hours I don't doubt my being better able to write."

"*January* 1st.

"This day ought to begin with congratulations and good wishes to my mother and you, and I beg you both to accept them from me. You see Michael Sharp sometimes, I suppose. Pray desire him to take care of my father's picture for me—it is like him, though not quite what I could wish—at least, I used to think so. It is precious now, however. Perhaps my mother would choose to have it; if she would, let it be framed for me as it ought to be, and hung up in her drawing room. The letters I write my wife I consider as letters to you all; you hear from time to time, as she receives them, what I do, what I see, and that I am well. I can't imagine a more amiable friend and companion to anybody under affliction than my wife—she is affectionate at once, and cheerful, and I know how particularly she would stifle her own feelings, and exert herself, to be a consolation to my mother. You must have had much to undergo, Charles; much of grief and much of trouble—I wish I had been at home to partake them with you, and be some ease to you. Nothing, in my opinion, could be better judged than your interring my poor father without the least affectation of any

parade; and I agree with you entirely that his remains should be protected by a simple stone; but I beg that, in the plain memorial inscribed on it, his AGE may be mentioned. Long life implies virtuous habits, and they are real honours.

"I thank you for the news you send me, though you don't find me at this moment in a disposition to think much about the THEATRE. As far as regards your own particular in it, you have nothing now to do but to act your best, let your part be what it will, for your own progress in your art;—to do whatever is within your power for your employers, out of common honesty.

"I need not ask you to find the strongest and the tenderest terms to offer my duty to my mother in. Sid, Sally, Cicely, Harry, all have my love. I write to my wife by this post. I have only received a letter from Charles Moore (of Nov. 21st), by the mail that brought me your sad account of December 14th. I will write to him very soon, tell him. Adieu, my dear Charles.

"Ever your affectionate brother,
J. P. KEMBLE."

It would be very like insult to offer any thing in the way of comment upon such a letter as the foregoing. But I will risk the imputation even of officious criticism, to notice the beautiful reason assigned by Mr. Kemble for inscribing his father's age upon the stone which was to cover him, namely, that "long life implied virtuous habits," and that those, without any kind of dispute, were "real honours." It is difficult to select a more pregnant and convincing truth, conveyed in happier terms.

Mr. Kemble returned from this excursion greatly improved in health, and full of respect for the Spanish character. He spoke the language of the country very agreeably when we visited our friend Mr. Mitchel together, who is even an excellent critic in that noble and copious tongue.

Before I introduce Mr. Kemble upon the new stage of his professional life, every consideration of respect and propriety calls upon me for particular reference to the stage-manager, whom Mr. Kemble was now to succeed. I shall take the opportunity to notice cursorily the duties of that station. I shall look a little at the composition of the Covent Garden company, and endeavour to display its feelings upon the expected change; and then accurately exhibit the property into which Mr. Kemble was now admitted. The succeeding chapter will then delineate his first season, and display the full strength of the new arrangements.

The late Mr. William Lewis was better known to the

public as an actor than as a manager. On the stage, he was always the most vivacious, and at times the most elegant comic actor of his day. As the stage-manager, his duties were the almost daily attendance upon rehearsals; and that often uncomfortable intervention between the manager, Mr. Harris, and his authors or his actors. The energy of Mr. Harris, though he was usually at a distance, was constantly felt. Mr. Lewis gave immediate effect to his decisions. The monarch reserved, for the most part, matters of grace and favour to himself, and they were usually granted in person on his coming to town. His deputy had always to announce his displeasure, and to carry through the discipline of the stage. There was a kindness, a pleasantry about his manner, which almost reconciled an offender to his sentence. He knew exactly how to use the dreaded name of "*Demogorgon*," and got through the business with the feeling of a friend and the spirit of a gentleman. One part of the duty of a stage-manager is to cast and arrange the plays which are brought out. This, in course, requires a just estimate of the talents and steadiness of the company; and, in some instances, much address, to overbear the false estimate that human vanity is for ever making of its own merits. In new plays, to be sure, the stage-manager may be supposed to get the assistance of their authors. But it is only the veteran bard who can be of the least use on such occasions. There are so many points on which his manuscript affords no instruction, that a young writer is cruelly startled when he is asked, in a particular scene, "*how many* attendants he will have on?" Or, "what parts of the stage" his characters are to occupy? The same unforeseen puzzle falls upon him, when he is desired "to move" his performers during the dialogue, so as that their positions at last may be convenient for the *exit*. In the getting up of old plays, or such as have lain aside even for a few years, the first question asked upon a stage is, "How is the *business* done? who knows it?" The acting manager should, therefore, be a person of long experience, and have served himself under able generals. The drill is the principle of order—if you seldom rehearse, your acting will be intolerable. Where a part is written out with the mere accompaniment of the cues, a perception must be very quick indeed to be reasonably sure of the meaning. Questions, therefore, continually occur, *how* such a passage should be spoken? Your acting manager should be as ready in his reply, as the bow or courtesy is which always follows the information. Again, in well regulated theatres, the pronunciation should be uniform. If he should chance to catch, during the rehearsal, a little barn-door syllable or false accent, he will take the proper opportunity, *aside*, to refine the utterance, with

neither tart derision nor growling severity. As to the cadence of the speakers, it is almost impossible to meddle with it—perhaps the performer may be allowed his own tune, provided he sings it agreeably. About *emphasis* the manager may be as learned as he will.

Now, Mr. Lewis, though an Englishman by birth, had acted so long in Irish theatres, that he pronounced like the cultivated Irishman. In Mercutio, for instance, he used to exclaim, "a Jewilist, a Jewilist!" and other preferences he had, of a similar quality, many of which disfigure the pages of Sheridan's dictionary. The old gentleman used to justify his singularity by the authority of Swift, the friend of his father. But Swift, without a reference to the doubtful question about his birth, affected to speak as an Irishman, and half his verbal wit will be no joke at all, if read in the English manner. Qualified, however, amply, by temper, manners, and judgment, for a manager, Mr. Lewis had sustained the toils of a rehearsal in the morning, with the additional labours of his own study and performance as an actor always before the town, for a period of TWENTY years, and standing as high at the theatre with his brethren, as he did with the patentee. He kept himself in unfailing health and spirits, by a daily walk between rehearsal and dinner up to Hyde Parke and back again. For many years together, he was as noticeable to the full in this range as the Duke of Queensberry; and it was obvious that his gaiety was not a forced plant of the hot-house—it flourished, like his slender switch, in the open air. Pleasant, sensible, worthy Lewis, many a whimsical story have I heard from you in this your beaten track! In talking of old actors, he would sometimes utter heresies. But O'Brien, in comedy, was his idol. Woodward he considered positively vulgar, and Garrick himself hardly genteel.

Mr. Lewis, from his long connexion with Mr. Harris, was permitted to purchase one-sixth part of the Covent Garden property, for which he paid twenty-three thousand pounds; and in doing this he then conceived himself to have secured a desirable and permanent provision for his family. I have been told, that Mrs. Lewis never could feel happy in this purchase, and that it was finally at her entreaty it was given up. Admirable Sir Fretful! "Upon my soul, the women are the best judges after all." It might probably occur to her, that, in addition to the public fickleness, PROPERTY is a frightful test of friendship; and she might tremble at the possibility, however slight, of any ground of difference between her husband and Mr. Harris, in whom besides, for his life, the absolute management of the concern was vested.

I had once intended to pass over in profound silence a mutiny

in the concern, which had produced very important, if not ruinous results, but for the invincible firmness of Mr. Harris. The following gentlemen figured on this occasion, during the year 1800, as the GLORIOUS EIGHT, who had undertaken the redress of all wrongs, and definitively to raise the profession from what they imagined a degrading servitude to the consequence of their rank as gentlemen and artists :—Messrs. Holman, Pope, Munden, Fawcett, John Johnstone, H. Johnston, Incledon, and T. Knight, who had first thrown down the apple of discord in Covent Garden.*

The whole dispute was referred at last to my Lord Salisbury, then Lord High Chamberlain, and determining most decidedly in the main for the manager, he regulated that performers should have three weeks' previous notice of the nights fixed for their respective benefits. The dread of similiar disturbances produced its natural effect upon the mind of Lewis. He knew that a house so divided could not long flourish; he felt also the certainty, that theatrical property, *communibus annis*, gave miserable interest for money. Foresight, once alarmed, quickened into the perception, that the house itself was getting old; and that a new theatre could only be built by a further advance of capital, or entailing a burthen of new renters upon the concern. He, therefore, after holding the property only a single year, at his own request, relinquished the purchase; and the stronger ambition of Mr. Kemble subsequently led him to acquire that sixth of the concern at the former price of twenty-three thousand pounds.

A few considerations here offer themselves to the mind as to the union of persons so long opposed to each other, and the introduction of a man into the concern, who must cease to be himself if he concurred in the usual system of the Covent Garden management. The whole mind of Mr. Kemble was bent upon rendering his present house the palace of Shakspeare; all that he had done, at the other theatre, towards a more perfect representation of his plays, was to be now therefore transferred to one devoted to a different scale of expense, and a less ambitious principle of management. In point of consequence and character, Mr. Kemble's system was great and captivating. He withdrew from Drury Lane its former classical feature, stamped originally by Garrick, and perpetuated by the great talents of his sister, and his own. The policy of Mr. Harris was cautious;

* As the reader may feel a wish to know the *personal* result as to the performers, I have to remark that Mr. Holman was the sacrifice on this occasion. The other *seven* wandering stars were soon happily reinstated in their spheres, and became quite obedient to the cloud-compelling Jupiter.

and he might conceive himself obtaining on this occasion all that he wanted on the one hand, while, as to the rest of the arrangements, the absolute power of the management gave him full opportunity to indulge the town with novelties; which, however slighted by his partner, he had found in a commercial view highly profitable, and not too expensive. As to his avowed passion, therefore, Mr Kemble was greatly indulged, but he did not entirely govern. Still, as may be supposed, considerable alarm was felt, by the old friends of the concern, at the coming in of a gentleman so inflexible in his taste; and the performers of the company had no few apprehensions that the future business of the stage might be more troublesome than the past had been, from the great zeal and critical accuracy of the new manager.

The estimated value of Covent Garden Theatre, patent, house, wardrobe, scenery, machinery, and every description of stage properties, at the time Mr. Kemble came into the concern, was 138,000*l.* The proprietors and their respective shares stand thus upon the deed, and I use the terms of that instrument to convey an exact knowledge of the distribution.

Thos. Harris was possessed of	six	undivided	twelfth parts, being equal to a moiety - - -	12–24ths.
John P. Kemble	„	„	of two undivided twelfth parts, being equal to one sixth part,	4–24ths.
George White	„	„	of one undivided twelfth part, and one moiety or half part of another undivided twelfth part being together equal to one-eighth part thereof - -	3–24ths.
A. Martindale	„	„	the same as Geo. White -	3–24ths
Henry Harris	„	„	of the remaining or other undivided twelfth part of, and in the said Theatre Royal - -	2–24ths.
				24 Total.

Upon a comparison with that loveliest of all theatres, the Apollo Drury, the interior of Covent Garden was always considered heavy. It was therefore determined to lighten the general effect. The frontispiece of the Theatre was raised ten feet. The slips, instead of carrying the rudeness of the gallery all round the house, were now converted into boxes. The fronts of the boxes were painted chastely dead white and gold, and their insides party-coloured green, with suitable ornaments. To show, too, what were the expectations from the fashionable world, on thus transferring the seat of tragedy, sixteen private boxes were built, and let at 300*l.* a year each, and among their

proprietors were found the Duchesses of Northumberland and Devonshire, the Marchioness of Abercorn, the Earl of Egremont, Lady Holland, Lady Milner. Mrs. Vaughan, Mrs. Morton, Pitt, &c. &c., the declared patrons and admirers of the Kemble family. A connexion was thus fixed to the house, at least as splendid as the talents by which it was attracted. The higher orders being accommodated, the gentry had an additional seat given to the boxes in their two tiers, and the note of preparation sounded strongly through all the departments. The royal arms in the centre of the drop curtain had been used in the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre during the days of Cibber, Wilkes and Booth, and they seemed triumphantly to announce the return of theatric glory.

CHAPTER III.

The author's explanation.—Notice of the change in the Covent Garden management.—Feelings of the comic writers.—Dinner given by Mr. Kemble.—His first appearance at Covent Garden.—Revivals.—Pizarro transferred.—Raising the Wind.—The Caravan.—The Dog.—English Fleet.—Elliston and his benefit.—His copious address.—Miss Duncan.—Blind Bargain.—Kemble's kindness to its author.—Tobin.—Peculiar fate of Mr. Kemble.—Master Betty.—Sketch of him.—Hough.—Belfast.—Edinburgh and Mr. Jackson.—Home, the author of Douglas.—Macready.—Roscius in Town.—Immense crowd.—How he appeared.—Critically examined.—His house the first season.—Decline of his influence.—Mania cured, and how.

I HAVE now arrived at the opening of the winter season of 1803-4, and having thus brought the *particular* notice of the drama, with its authors and actors, down to a period within almost *general* recollection, the limits of my work may allowably restrict me to the leading events of the stage and the personal history of Mr. Kemble. I say the limits of my work, because I by no means feel, or affect to feel, any apprehension, where it may be necessary to treat of existing merits. It is surely possible, even in criticism, to catch that tone of urbanity, which qualifies rebuke by the obvious conviction, that the writer can have no *spleen* to gratify. Difference of opinion may be expected in the fluctuations of taste; but a smile of superior genius will easily dispose of inveterate prejudice in the critic, who cannot help his birth in another century, and may, perhaps, pride himself upon being taught in a different school.

The change of the stage management was very properly noticed from the stage by Fawcett, who spoke and sang an occasional address, composed on the spur of the moment, probably by Dibdin. Its object was to let Mr. Lewis down comfortably from his command to that private station in the company, which, as he filled it, was distinction enough for any man. The feeling of this address, whoever wrote it, partook more of affection to the old course than triumph in the new.

"In fame's gazette, perhaps our mimic band
Has advertis'd some change in its command;
Has told you, here a *fav'rite chief* you'll find,
Vice another favourite resign'd:
And our *new* captain we salute with pride,
Since by your judgment he's approv'd as tried.
Yet inclination, duty, each impel
To speak of him who lately rul'd so well;
Who though he quit a truncheon for the ranks,
His mirthful efforts still shall ask your thanks;
And hold, while flatter'd here with approbation,
His post of honour in a private station."

The writer then goes on to enumerate the coming claims of *comedy* and *opera*—and the accession of the two greatest tragedians in the world is hinted only in the phrase that, in laughter's *interval*, at times the audience will hear

"Melpomene *petition* for a tear."

Surely the situation of Leontes is here evinced among the company—

"I have *tremor cordis* on me—my heart dances;
But not for joy—not joy." WINTER'S TALE.

Melpomene too was in no very mendicant condition, maintaining, as she did, *five* members of the Kemble family in her suite at this theatre—Mr. Kemble himself, Mr. Charles Kemble, Mr. H. Siddons, Mrs. Siddons, and her daughter-in-law, Mrs. H. Siddons.

The comic writers for that theatre were by no means *pleasant* under the change; they had found the field open long, and were alarmed at any invasion. Mr. Harris said what he could to still their apprehensions, but they bore their dismay in legible characters about with them. One of Thalia's chief supporters, upon this *serious* advent, was advised "to fall in gratitude to his knees, that Heaven had blessed him with only *two* children." He did the only proper thing on the occasion—he imparted the advice received to Mr. Kemble himself, who told me of it, almost suffocated with *laughter*.

In England every thing is settled by a dinner, and the new allies invited Sheridan to witness their mutual felicity. When the wine had circulated freely, the proprietors of Covent Garden began to express their sentiments in a vein of the greatest cordiality—upon which Sheridan, with very bitter pleasantry, reproached them with their facility or their hypocrisy.—"Two fellows," said he, "that have absolutely hated each other deadly all their lives."—"*False*," said Mr.

Harris, (very whimsically,) we have not hated each other these *six* weeks—have we, Kemble ?"

The truth is, that there is nothing in liberal competition, for either fame or fortune, that should unfit men for union. Cicero has long since told us, that the most effectual cement is the familiarization to each other of minds marked by their integrity.—"Sed omnium societatum nulla præstantior est, nulla firmior, quam cum VIRI BONI moribus similes familiaritate conjuncti sunt."—*De Officiis*, lib. i.

Before Mr. Kemble entered upon his allotted management, he entertained the leading actors of Covent Garden at his house, in Great Russel street; and his great rival, Cooke, attended the invitation, as it appeared to me, with very sincere pleasure. Mr. Const, Mr. Reynolds, and myself, were invited, although he had never trod the boards, and a very peculiar and not unentertaining day we had of it. Before dinner was served up, I fell into conversation with Cooke in the library, and, if I had not acquired too decisive evidences of his indiscretion to doubt the charges against him, from any thing done or said by him on that day I should never have suspected his firmness, but have left him, thoroughly a convert to his well-informed mind and gentlemanly manners.

I shall by no means remove the veil, which in decent life should always be thrown between the convivial and the calm observer. One pleasantry we had, late of course in the sittings, which burst from the prolific fancy of H. Johnston. He chose to imagine, in the Christmas preparation of a pantomime, the sudden and alarming indisposition of the *Harlequin ;* and he made Mr. Harris himself announce the event to the company, and call upon their zeal for the property, to show with what success they could supply the place of that knight with the wooden sword. The course he prescribed to himself for each person was a remonstrance in their *tone* of voice—their perfect *action* in rising to make the attempt, in the circular run, in the rolling of the head, and the usual attitudes ; concluding with a leap at the door, to imitate the agile escape of that hero. He spared neither the absent nor the *present* members of the fraternity, and no man in the room more enjoyed the harlequin of Mr. Cooke, than he did *himself.*

Mr. Johnston, however, was then no longer a member of the Covent Garden company, having concluded an engagement at the other theatre ; and Mr. Charles Kemble filled his line of business under the new management. Incledon obliged us with some of his finest airs, given with a power of

tone, and a pathos, that I never, before or since, have heard so astonishingly combined. The vibration he excited in the room, (an extremely fine one,) seemed absolutely to threaten every thing vitreous around him. I retired, not among the *latest* of the guests, in the fear that something might occur to break in upon recollections so agreeable.

It was on the 24th of September, 1803, that Mr. Kemble made his first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre in his favourite Hamlet, which part, precisely TWENTY years before, had introduced him to a London audience, at the rival house. The applause was extreme upon his entrance, and his new friend, Mr. Harris, paid him the compliment of attending his performance.

Mrs. Siddons, with similar policy, kept to her original charm, and acted Isabella on the 27th. She excited and justified the highest admiration.

The new manager had made an arrangement with Mr. Cooke, calculated to conciliate their rival claims, in consequence of which, on the 3d of October, to Mr. Cooke's Richard Mr. Kemble performed the Earl of Richmond. On the 5th Mr. Kemble acted one of his most admired parts in comedy, Lord Townley, and Miss Louisa Brunton, a younger sister of Mrs. Merry, made her debût in his Lady, and gave the promise of a very elegant, if not a great and original, votaress of the comic muse. This play was perfectly acted in all its parts. The John Moody of Emery was what Lear calls the "*thing itself;*" look, action, tone, dialect, feeling, all true, and all Yorkshire.

The beautiful tragedy of Douglas followed, on the 6th, in which Mr. Kemble now acted the *Stranger*, and H. Siddons his adopted son. The printing of Sheridan's *Pizarro* laid it open, of course, to every stage, and Mr. Kemble got it up at his present theatre with great splendour. In nearly all its essentials the play, though it had changed its scene, retained its original performers; with the exception now of Murray and his daughter, in Ataliba and Cora. Cooke, it was supposed, would be very *powerful* in Pizarro. I think Sir Wilful Witwood, in the third degree of *drink*, is also said to be "powerful." Upon his entrance it was soon apparent, that he knew nothing that he *did*, and the audience could understand nothing that he *said*. He fell back overpowered, before the conclusion of the first act, and, in the opinion of the spectators, was dead drunk. Mr. Kemble came on, and assured the house that "Mr. Cooke was *really* unwell, and unable to proceed;" of which, in truth, there could not be the smallest doubt; and Mr. Siddons even distinguished himself in reading

the character. Three days afterwards, Cooke was allowed very indulgently to perform Pizarro; I believe without the dramatic certificate of any physician—a document at all times of infinite value for its *accuracy*.

One of Mr. Kemble's favourite afterpieces was Arthur and Emmeline, so finely acted formerly by himself and Miss Farren. Their present representatives were Charles Kemble and Mrs. H. Siddons. It was still delightful.

The 5th of November presented the first dramatic production of James Kenny, in the farce called *Raising the Wind*. The needy adventurer, Jeremy Diddler, who has lost every thing but his spirits, and makes *them* carry him through every thing, in the hands of Lewis was a source of exquisite diversion. Often as I bring that delightful actor before me, and renew *faintly* (which Mr. JONES does *not* do) the astonishing varieties of his hilarity, I repeatedly see his accomplished deportment covering the unfortunate *rents* in his only coat, and borrowing such a *thing* as two and tenpence, or some such odd and broken sum of money. As Mr. Reynolds, on the 12th, chose to transfer his *three per cents.* from the stock of the Governor and Company of Covent Garden, I have nothing to say. In my opinion, the *interest* was as good as he could procure in any other fund; and if he had waited but a single day, there would have been a great demand in the market, and a consequent *rise* of "three per cents." But he had latterly been amusing himself with water-works; and imagined that the *actual element*, flowing between canvass rocks and painted herbage, overshaded by immovable foliage, would be a vast improvement in our stage; and that a *real* dog would make a *real* splash in a trough containing *real* water. All this he put in proof on the 5th of December in his serio-comico romance called "The Caravan," at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. No man ever took better measure of the public mind than Reynolds.

There was a little scandal in the theatre, on the subject of this dog. The brave fellow, who plunged into the stream, and actually saved the child, was a native of Newfoundland, and named Carlo. Now it was said that the animal who "smelt the lamps" was actually a mastiff, in the service of the stage-manager, Bannister himself. It was reported, too, that, when presenting himself to the house, he dressed himself up in clothes of the same colour and cut as those worn by the diver, even to the *hair* and the *queue*, and stood impudently before the spectators with all the swagger of having performed the achievement. So, gentle reader, in our panto-

mimes, there is one ground Harlequin, who does the *motions*, and another who takes the *leap*.

This afterpiece was extremely popular, brought very good latter accounts, and was followed by another, *Cinderella;* which, combined with the Soldier's Daughter, a very successful comedy, by Cherry, saved Drury Lane from the ruin that might reasonably have been apprehended, the strength considered which had been attached to the rival theatre. So that Bannister, as he well might, took some credit to his management, when returning thanks at the close of the season. They had, in fact, received at the doors, in their 200 nights, the sum of 49,427*l.* 1*s.* which gave an average of 242*l.* 2*s.* 8*d.* per night.

The other house, during the season, brought forward a most successful opera, The English Fleet in 1342, by the dexterous and indefatigable Dibdin; and Braham, Incledon, and Storace, without any great difficulty, rendered it triumphant.

As to the *division* of the management, exclusively Mr. Kemble's, he had planted in his new garden some of those hardy children of *nature*, that must ever flourish, with proper attention to them, and returned thanks himself to the public, in fact for crediting *themselves* by attending the finest representations in the world of our sterling drama.

The summer season produced little noticeable, except the beginning *address* of that extraordinary man, Mr. Elliston. On the 10th of September he solicited the public to countenance a *benefit* at the Opera House—the little theatre being too small either for his attraction or his hopes. He announced Pizarro, with Love Laughs at Locksmiths, and it was one o'clock in the morning before the doors of the theatre could be secured. Any temporary *invasion* of this region of fashion has always been precious to the visitors of our common theatres; they consider it in short as a *cheap* luxury—they enter the almost forbidden circle of the higher orders, and imagine raptures in the experiment "that they never know."

But as the half-guineas at the pit-door of the opera are rather deliberately laid down, and no money can ever be taken in its season at the box door, the architect of the house never planned any securities to keep the people from entering too rapidly. They in truth *dropt* rather than *rusht* in. On the present occasion, a multitude assembled at the doors, before whose pressure they ere long gave way, and all the petty impediments of the Italian gentry were swept aside; some paid their money and got no *checks;* others threw down bank

notes and took no *change*—many were carried in by a torrent, that was too rapid even for the operations of the plunderer.

Our inimitable friend came forward to notice that the *terms of admission* had in very many cases not been *complied with*. "Good phrases," says Bardolph, "surely are, and ever were, very commendable." His appeal to the *honour* of the audience was most liberally answered on their parts. Some of his friends with pewter plates in their hands collected through the pit; and the most assiduous churchwardens never heard the offerings of charity clatter more cheerfully. The honour of our hero was pledged to supply change for the *notes* that had been taken; and in spite of accidents, he was said to have received, at least, 600 pounds that evening.

After *bleeding*, quiet usually is restored to the agitated frame: no sooner was the curtain up, than the stage was found almost covered with people standing ten rows deep. A violent storm once more arose among the visitors in the body of the house, who figured to themselves what a business Pizarro would make of it, with at least three hundred *English* in the Peruvian army. But Elliston turned a nuisance into *perfume* by a second address, as to "the necessity of accommodating those who had done him an honour, the remembrance of which would never be eradicated from his heart." He added—"I humbly trust, therefore, that to a *Briton* you will not deny that favour, which your *spontaneous goodness* formerly granted to a *foreigner*."

The plea of course was irresistible; not that the present audience knew one title of the case that was cited for their emulation; which, in fact, was an opera benefit for Madame Banti; when, in truth, it little signified who were on or off the stage, so as she *herself* was but there.

The close of the little theatre called for more of his dexterity—for they had somehow dispensed, in the latter part of the Mountaineers, with both *Sadi* and *Agnes*. On he comes, and, as usual, to the purpose. Hear him—

"To this I believe I may impute that partial disapprobation which I have just heard. The circumstance might have been *glossed over*, but we always prefer speaking the TRUTH."

When he comes to return thanks for the MANAGER, he slily takes credit for the *copia verborum* of his own compliments—"It is difficult (*not* for HIM) to vary the expressions of gratitude, which your favour has so repeatedly excited.

"The PERFORMERS, ladies and gentlemen, join with me in acknowledging the *fullest force* of your liberality and sup-

port; and we most respectfully, most gratefully, and most *affectionately*, bid you farewell."

I should be afraid to trust such spontaneous flow with deliberate composition. Mr. Pitt was said not to be quite felicitous upon *paper*. I almost wish that Elliston would refuse even to write an *order*.

My pleasant bustling friend is supposed by some people to be rather too fond of these *personal appeals*, and there have been occasions, on which even his prudence in making them seems rather questionable. Besides, from his success, a fashion attaches to such things; and now, "every puny whipster gets his sword:" but I can safely afford him the praise of being the great and unrivalled master of all *moving* accidents; the courageous captain of *compliments;* the *standing* advertisement of his own success; and the happiest *sedative* that was ever exhibited to an unruly body.

Although I shall be obliged to occupy great space in the notice of the young Roscius, yet it would be unpardonable to omit the appearance in the metropolis of an actress so excellent as Miss Duncan. When quite an infant, Miss Farren expressed her admiration of the *little wonder*, as she called her, and hoped to see her, at maturity, the future Farren of Drury Lane Theatre. This Miss Farren did *not* see, but the Countess of Derby, I hope, both saw it, and *patronized* her best representative. In some respects she surpasses her model; she is a good singer and a fine dancer. She has more *force* than her great predecessor, but not equal delicacy; and, with a finer figure, is less interesting. But she is an *actress*. Her first appearance was on the 8th of October, 1804, when she performed Lady Teazle at Drury Lane Theatre. Matthews was her *Sir Peter*, and Elliston *Charles;* and both of them sinking "ten thousand fathoms" below the *originals*, and yet both possessing no mean degree of talent.

At Covent Garden Theatre on the 24th, from the non-arrival of Charles Kemble, Reynolds had to exhibit the *new* PATENTEE in his comedy of the *Blind Bargain!* He ventured, with a suitable apology, to ask Mr. Kemble to supply his brother's place. He received the following characteristic reply.

(Copy.)

"MY DEAR REYNOLDS,

"I intended to do what you wish I should; and all I have to ask in return is, that you will think it no favour at all.

"Best compliments to Mrs. Reynolds.

"Yours, J. P. KEMBLE."

He sustained the play, by the energy with which he represented the sufferings and the worth of *Villars*. This is *refined* virtue; Emery gave to the rustic, *Woodbine*, a perfection which, like Mr. Kemble, he alone could impart. The fun of the piece was found in lexicography—Sir Andrew Analyse (Fawcett) equals Johnson himself in ludicrous definition. An AUTHOR is a man "who never *lives* till he *dies*;" and a DUN is a fellow "such a favourite in the fashionable squares, that he is always desired to *call again*."

The play was well received.

I have in general felt disposed to advocate the decisions of managers: because it confessedly is their interest to welcome every novelty of promise. The only thing in the *way* of sound discretion is when the director of a stage combines the two-fold functions of caterer and actor. In this dilemma Mr. Garrick was placed, in the few instances where his decision was refuted by complete success. Those instances were the *Douglas* of Home, the *Cleone* of Dodsley, the *Orphan of China*, by Murphy, The true reason in all these of his coldness was, that the *female* interest predominated—that Mrs. Cibber would have entirely overwhelmed him. This reason he was not bold enough to assign; so the first was too "*simple* and *undramatic*;" the second "*cruel, bloody*, and *unnatural*;"—and the third, after Murphy had complied with all his strictures, was "*totally unfit*" for the stage. His answers might have been couched in three words—"Lady Randolph," "Cleone," "Mandane."

The modern scribblers assail managers with the delightful *Honey Moon*,

"Et *plorata* diu meministis *fata* BIONIS."

Had the genius of poor Tobin, say they, received a suitable welcome, his health would not have declined, and an amiable and excellent poet might have lived long among us in the enjoyment of his enviable reputation. Yet even here, though perhaps very few may be entitled to plead the precedent, even *here* Mr. Sheridan might reasonably have said, and Mr. Kemble certainly did say—"The Honey Moon as to *character* and *language* is an absolute *cento* from Shakspeare and his cotemporaries: What more are the Duke and his wife than *Petruchio and Catherine?* The sham duke is *Christofero Sly*.—Roland is *Duretete*. In addition to all which, we have the *Viola* of Shakspeare combining with the equally enchanting *Bellario* of Fletcher, to form another faithful pilgrim in the train of love."

The language was equally modelled after our *Augustan* period; and struck the ear (high praise indeed!) like rescued leaves from Mr. Warburton's Cookwench, preserving from the bottoms of his pies some of the lamented treasures of the author of Philaster and the Faithful Shepherdess. That, perhaps, Fletcher thus at second hand should be "devoutly wished," pure taste might decide in the affirmative, but no vehement censure will lie against a manager who rejects not only certain but *glaring* plagiarism. The experiment *might* have failed—has often failed.

There was something peculiarly hard in the theatrical life of Mr. Kemble; and a frequent return of the annoyance showed it to be his fate, to find the popular favour perpetually wrested from him by candidates, whom he could not respect, if, indeed, he did not rather despise them. Cooke, if not advanced *before* him by the MANY, which I think he was, they at least allowed to stand by his side, whenever he *could* stand—but Kemble, and even Cooke himself, were now doomed to the danger that once menaced Shakspeare and his fellows at the Blackfriars, the danger and the mortification of being beaten by a *child*.

William Henry West Betty, the son of W. Henry and Mary Betty, as it appears on the parish register of St. Chad's, Shrewsbury, was born the 13th of September, 1791. His mother, whose maiden name was Stanton, was the daughter of a most respectable gentleman residing near Worcester. His father, a few years after the birth of his son, retired to his native place, and carried on the linen manufactory at or near Ballynahinch, county Down.

In looking for the accidents which suggest or promote a favourite propensity—the first thing remarkable is, that the mother of the youth was exceedingly fond of dramatic amusements, and herself, it seems, an interesting speaker; she was even fond of acting in private with her sisters. Her son therefore conceived a love of declamation from the lips of his mother.

The summer of 1802 carried Mrs. Siddons to Belfast, and the manager got up Pizarro with much splendour for that great woman's performance of Elvira. His father took Master Betty then, for the first time, to *see* a play; and fortunately for him—his youthful sight first opened on *perfection*. An enthusiasm so ardent was kindled in his mind, that his life would have been endangered by the disappointment of his hopes; he resolved to be an *actor*, and with the simplicity of a child, he thought of nothing but *Elvira:* he spoke only the speeches of *Elvira:* the voice of Siddons perpetually sounded in his ear, and it

was some time before his studies would take the direction even of his *sex*.

As soon as his parents saw that our youth was steady in his determination, they took the best means within their reach of ascertaining what others might think of their son's requisites for the stage: and they consulted the Belfast manager, Mr. Atkins, and his prompter Mr. Hough. The latter gentleman was evidently the *mind* of Betty's acting; an interesting *person*, a prepossessing *countenance*, eyes of much *intelligence*, great *animation* and *ardour*, infinite *energy*, and the utmost *grace* at a period when even the graceful are commonly awkward, completed the attractions, which for some time took entire possession alike of wisdom and folly, the elevated and the humble; and produced a delirium, with which there could be no contending; for it reduced the greatest men among us to drivel nonsense on *this* subject, which has never been exceeded in the most remarkable delusions of taste.

Mr. Hough was now constituted the *guardian angel* of Betty, and directed his studies. Those who reject every thing that is not *miracle*, transferred to a boy of *eleven* years old the CONCEPTION of all the characters that he performed; but the real truth may be found in the recorded opinion of one who could not but know it, and it was this: "Mr. Hough found that he possessed a *docility* even greater than his genius; for whatever he was *directed* to do, he could instantly execute, and was sure *never to forget*. He found that his feelings could take the *impression* of every passion and sentiment. Whatever was *properly presented* to his mind he could immediately *lay hold of*, and seemed to seize, by a sort of intuitive sagacity, the *spirit* of every sentence, and the prominent *beauties* of every remarkable passage." And all this is indeed extraordinary in a youth of no greater age! I know the way in which an early sketch suggests to the imagination; and how she fills up the outline, which TIME refuses so constantly to confirm. I therefore willingly allow a retreat to the rashness of prophetic admiration, and permit even those who would have erected statues to him THEN, to exclaim now, "I only said, the boy was a clever *boy*."

But something is due to the offended feelings of mature excellence, for a season thrown aside as comparatively worthless! Looking, as a *manager* must look at it, to the engagement of Master Betty as a fine commercial speculation,—as an *actor*, Mr. Kemble could not but feel deeply humbled by the absurd preference which it implied.

The first engagement of this youth was at Belfast, in the month of August, 1803, and the Ozman of Voltaire's Zara was the character chosen for his debût. Mr. Hough had made his pupil *do* every thing that his own memory and judgment suggested in the character; and though he could not divest him of the *vulgarisms* of habitual speech, he yet gave him a good *tune* at least to carry them off; and nature had fully enabled the youth to put a good face upon the matter. His success was prodigious.

But the *great bell* was rung to him by Jackson, of Edinburgh, who literally must have lost his wits, were we to judge of him by the flighty stuff, which he wrote upon the boy. One paragraph, as he must have wished, shall be preserved in stage history.

"It is one of those singularities of nature, that neither* *history* nor tradition can furnish, but which is now beheld by us; but never can be seen again, till the AUTHOR of all things shall, when he thinks meet, condescend to endue another stripling in *embryo* with a similar incredible combination of stage endowments, for the gratification of cotemporary admiration."

But he does far better than this, at all events in Scotland, for the fame of his stripling—for he places John Home himself, the author of Douglas, in his old seat at the first wing, to enable him to judge the merits of young Betty, whose *back* he could clearly discover the whole of the performance. Home was at this time in his 70th year. The applause was such as the play had never before received, and the veteran bard seemed to think it excited by the *play* then; accordingly he rose from his seat, suddenly rushed before the curtain, bowed respectfully to the audience, and thus snatched the MOB CAP from the head of *Betty*.

His opinion, however, the opinion of the author of the play, —of Home himself, speaking of Betty *himself*—Oh,

> "If that had been forgotten,
> It had been as a gap in our great feast,
> And all things unbecoming."

Sir, said he, to the learned Jackson—"This is the *first* time I ever saw the part of Douglas played; that is, according to *my* ideas of the character, as at the time I conceived it, and as I wrote it." Poor dear man, I am afraid he had not quite

* Mr. Jackson, by this, seems at all events to have been *well* read in history. The *state* of our frame when it is "*endued* with stage *endowments*," *i. e.* in embryo, is particularly learned.

cleared his head from the *misprision* of applause just noticed, and therefore it would be cruel to bind his judgment too strongly down. He had seen *Digges*, when young, in Edinburgh,—he had seen *Barry*, when young, in London—yet this was the *first* time ;—but I honour him for the first scene of his third act, and will not insult his memory !

My old friend Macready had requested Jackson to engage the Roscius for the Birmingham Theatre. He loved a *cheap* article, and was delighted that Jackson obtained him for *ten* pounds per night. But when he arrived, he no sooner saw him than he wished to be let off so ruinous an engagement. The friends of Betty had no objection, provided he should be indemnified for the journey from Edinburgh to Birmingham. Macready hit upon a *comfortable* arrangement. "From the nightly receipts first deduct, said he, SIXTY pounds, and then we *divide* the remainder equally." It was immediately agreed to, and our *cautious* manager paid the boy FIFTY pounds per night instead of *ten*.

But at length we return to London, where he was to have at each theatre 50 guineas per night, and a free benefit. Mrs. Litchfield was then disengaged; but Mr. Kemble came himself and renewed her engagement. Her height suited the figure of the boy better than the overpowering stature of Mrs. Powell at the other house. He came to Covent Garden Theatre seemingly a very gentle, modest, well disposed youth; very ingenuous, not in the least conceited or spoiled, but delighted to act, and always doing his best. In rehearsing with him he appeared to be perfectly composed, and thoroughly initiated in what is called the business of the play.

Saturday the 1st of December, 1804, was the day distinguished by the first performance in town of the young Roscius. As early as one o'clock the crowd began to assemble about Covent Garden Theatre, filling the piazzas on one side of the house, and Bow Street on the other. At the proper time all the popular arts were practised to obtain admission.

> "The Theatre, too small, did suffocate
> Its squeez'd contents, and more than it admitted
> Did sigh at their exclusion, and return
> Ungratified. For BETTY there, the *boy*,
> Did strut, and storm, and straddle, stamp and stare,
> And show the world how GARRICK did *not* act.
> TASK, B. vi.

The utmost danger was apprehended now, because those who had quite ascertained that it was impossible for them to *get in*, by the dreadful pressure behind them could not get

back. At length, they themselves called for the soldiers, who with their usual temper and firmness soon cleared the fronts of the entrances, and then posting themselves properly, lined the passages, permitting any one to return, but none to enter. The pit was half filled by gentlemen who had sprung down from the boxes. The actual occupiers of the boxes by *force* retained them against the owners of the places, and the police officers, who attempted to be their ushers. All that the *gallantry* of the men would consent to was allowing ladies, in some cases, to occupy the *front* seat, while the remainder of of the box was held by the strong right of *possession*. Drury Lane Theatre had a weak bill on that occasion, and really benefitted 200*l*., by the turn-over. They had 237*l*. 16*s*. 6*d*. at the first account to the Busy Body, and a half-price of 67*l*. 12*s*.

The play was Dr. Brown's Barbarossa, a very good and spirited imitation of the Merope of Voltaire, in which Garrick had formerly acted Achmet to the tyrant of Mossop. On the present occasion the cast was this:

Barbarossa, - - -	Mr. Hargrave.
Achmet (*Selim*), - -	Betty
Othman, - - -	Murray.
Sadi, - - - -	Cresswell.
Aladin, - - -	Cory.
Zaphira, - - -	Mrs. Litchfield.
Irene, - - -	H. Siddons.

An occasional address was intended, and Mr. C. Kemble attempted to speak it. But they would not have heard even the address of Dr. Johnson, unless Master Betty himself had delivered it; and this notion, Heaven knows how, had entered the heads, I found, of some quantity of barren spectators. The play proceeded through the first act with a tempest rather stronger than that which announces the first appearance of a pantomime. In the first scene of the second act, Mrs. Litchfield's skill made them apply a speech of Zaphira to Bonaparte.

At length Barbarossa ordered Achmet to be brought before him; "attention held them mute;" not even a whisper could be heard, till the highly honoured object of their curiosity stood in their presence. Upon the thunder of applause that ensued he was not "*much* moved"—he bowed very respectfully, but with amazing self-possession in a few moments turned him to his work, with the intelligence of a veteran, and the youthful passion that alone could have accomplished for a task so arduous. As a slave he wore white linen panta-

loons, a close and rather short russet jacket, trimmed with sable, and a turban hat.

What first struck me was, that his voice had considerable power and a depth of tone beyond his apparent age. At the same time it appeared *heavy* and *unvaried*. His great fault grew out of the want of careful tuition in the outset. In the provincial way, he dismissed the *aspirate;* and, in his closing syllables, ending in *m*, or *n*, he converted the vowel *i* frequently into *e*, and sometimes more barbarously still into *u*. Whether he obtained this from careless speakers in Ireland or England, I cannot be sure; but this inaccuracy I remember to have sometimes heard even from Miss O'Neil.

He was at times too rapid to be distinct, and at others too noisy for any thing but rant. I found no peculiarities that denoted minute and *happy* studies. He spoke the speeches as I had always heard them spoken, and was therefore only *not* wrong where he laid vehement emphasis. The wonder was how *any* boy, who had just completed his 13th year, could catch *passion*, *meaning*, *cadence*, *action*, *expression*, and the *discipline* of the stage, in TEN very different and arduous characters, so as to give the kind of pleasure in them, that needed no *indulgence*, and which, from that very circumstance, heightened satisfaction into enthusiasm.

His admirers made him their *divinity;* when he was ill, he had all the beauties of England at his door, and a *bulletin* announced the degrees of his convalescence to a fevered and impatient public.

The patentees of Covent Garden Theatre had hoped to keep him to themselves: but there seemed, in an engagement for a certain number of nights, no reason why he should not be at liberty to dispose, as his parents judged fit, of the *remainder* of his time. They would naturally husband his powers as much as was consistent with that first law in the exhibition of such ventures, namely, to "take the current *while* it served." This, I believe, was done; and in his youth an ample fortune secured for his maturity.

Covent Garden Theatre was not quite so large as the Apollo Drury. I therefore, in citing his receipts for 23 nights at the latter, show the utmost force of his attraction. They were all *royal* nights. I give accurately both first and second accounts, that so curious a detail may be publicly known. For his first three nights he received 150 guineas, and after that 100 guineas nightly.

	Day.	Play.	Farce.	First Account.	Second Account.	Total.
1804. Dec.	10. Monday	Douglas	Citizen	L.662 8 6	L.43 19 6	L.706 8 0
	13. Thursday	Do.	Of Age To-morrow	720 2 0	31 17 6	751 19 6
	15. Saturday	Barbarossa	Spoiled Child	584 19 6	33 7 0	618 6 6
1805. Feb.	13. Wednesday	Douglas	Deserter	673 7 6	46 10 6	719 18 0
	15. Friday	Barbarossa	High Life Below Stairs	558 7 0	46 7 6	604 14 6
	19. Tuesday	Lovers' Vows	Citizen	571 16 6	44 5 0	616 1 6
	21. Thursday	Douglas	Bon Ton	652 3 6	36 13 6	688 17 0
	23. Saturday	Tancred	Apprentice	557 10 0	48 12 0	606 2 0
	26. Tuesday	Do.	Bon Ton	569 14 0	48 18 6	618 12 6
	28. Thursday	Lovers' Vows	Wedding Day	565 18 6	46 6 0	612 4 6
Mar.	2. Saturday	Douglas	Devil to Pay	605 13 0	41 8 0	647 1 0
	4. Monday	Romeo	Irishman in London	466 8 6	55 10 6	521 19 0
	7. Thursday	Do.	Devil to Pay	614 11 0	48 17 6	663 8 6
	9. Saturday	Douglas	Of Age To-morrow	626 16 6	43 11 0	670 7 6
	11. Monday	Barbarossa	Anatomist	553 3 6	50 13 6	603 17 0
	16. Saturday	Hamlet	Lying Valet	580 7 6	40 17 6	621 5 0
	18. Monday	Do.	Two Strings to Your Bow	482 15 6	45 9 0	528 4 6
	21. Thursday	Douglas	Citizen	568 18 6	48 8 0	617 6 6
	23. Saturday	Hamlet	Who's the Dupe	565 19 0	46 6 6	612 5 6
	25. Monday	Romeo	Virgin Unmasked	475 14 0	57 16 0	533 10 0
	28. Thursday	Douglas	Devil to Pay	628 15 0	41 0 6	669 15 6
	30. Saturday	Hamlet	Doctor and Apothecary	511 10 0	44 16 6	556 6 6
Apr.	1. Monday	Douglas	Bon Ton	445 14 0	59 14 6	505 8 6
	4. Thursday	Hamlet	Liar	560 17 6	42 14 0	603 11 6
	6. Saturday	Barbarossa	Cœur de Lion	535 12 0	45 7 6	580 19 6
	16. Tuesday	Hamlet	Spoiled Child	531 15 6	43 10 6	575 9 0
	18. Thursday	Douglas	Citizen	586 6 0	44 17 0	631 3 0
	22. Monday	Do.	Of Age To-morrow	462 16 6	62 12 6	525 9 0
			28 Nights in his first Town Season—produced a total of			L.17,210 11 0
					Nightly Average	L.614 13 3

Of part of this amazing influx the Proprietors made the best possible use.

At Michaelmas 1804, they owed the Duke of Bedford for Rent	L.2296 16 11
They paid it all up, and the Half-year to Lady-day 1805	858 18 3
	L.3155 15 2

Thus the reader has seen, in the accurate detail of the treasurer, that the sum taken by the house on his eight and twenty performances, was to the astonishing amount of seventeen thousand two hundred and ten pounds, eleven shillings, sterling money. That this gives an average receipt nightly, of six hundred and fourteen pounds, thirteen shillings, and three pence. That the treasury paid him for these services no less than

*L.*2782 10*s.* being 3 nights at 50 guineas	. .	*L.*157 10
25 do. 100 do.	. .	2625 0
		*L.*2782 10

This is independent of his benefits, which were all free, and of which he had four in the season; and these, with presents, must have been each worth 1000 guineas to him.

The boy, however, as I have said, was certainly extraordinary—still there was, rather too apparent, a great deficiency of *elementary* knowledge. One of his admirers proposed two measures, which, in his judgment, would supply all deficiencies. "Let them," said he, "buy him a *first folio* of Shakspeare; and get some clergyman to teach him *Greek*." Both of these *desiderata* were, I think, subsequently conferred upon Mr. Betty. I believe, too, that he taught himself *English*, not less necessary to his perfection than the language of Eschylus. But it was the *prodigy* that we followed, and not the powers. Our love could not last to his years of *discretion;* and when he really acted by his *own* understanding, his admirers had come to their senses.

In the mean time all the favouritism, and more than the innocence of former patronesses, was lavished upon him. He might have chosen, among our titled dames, the carriage he would honour with his person; and the young Roscius had "wiped away all trivial fond records" of the excellences of Siddons and Kemble. The ARTS strove to perpetuate his countenance and his figure: OPIE painted him on the Grampian hills, as the shepherd Norval—NORTHCOTE exhibited him in a Vandyke costume, retiring from the altar of Shakspeare, as having born thence, not stolen,

"Jove's *authentic* fire."

Heath engraved the latter picture, which the father published *himself;* and inscribed to H. R. H. the Duke of Clarence, a decided patron of the stage. Several heads adorned the fugitive lives of him, more or less like, as the artist had

been favoured with a private or public view of his features; and his *bust* was the rival of his pictures in our exhibitions. Amidst all this adulation, all this desperate folly, be it one consolation to his *mature* self, that he never lost the genuine modesty of his carriage, and that his temper at least was as steady as his diligence.

Mrs. Siddons was confined by a severe and tedious indisposition.

Mr. Kemble all this time said little; he acted Penruddock occasionally, and took a part of no great moment in a passing novelty. Indeed what can a sensible man decide, in such a night, but *attendre le jour?* It arrived at the close of the first season. Mrs. Litchfield, with her husband, had always been a devoted admirer of Mr. Kemble in tragedy. She had been an intelligent observer, a *close* one, of the new favourite, and had anticipated the return of the people to better attraction. It struck her to try, for her benefit, a tragedy of Shakspeare, acted by the *veteran* artists, and she asked Mr. Kemble whether he would play *Othello* for her night? His answer was, that he would do so with the greatest pleasure, but felt himself bound to tell her, that he thought the choice a weak one. She had concluded otherwise; and made the attempt to render the town ashamed of its injustice. Mr. Kemble acted Othello in a style of surpassing dignity and emotion. Cooke gave his utmost insinuation to Iago; and C. Kemble acted Cassio, so as to bestow a third fine male character upon the play. Mrs. H. Siddons, a lovely actress, was the Desdemona: she herself Emilia. Mr. Heathcote had the stage box, and the young Roscius sat in the front of it; and I have no sort of doubt, received a great and hearty pleasure from the performance. The audience were enthusiastic in their applause, and there were persons who said openly—"The charm is dispelled—the business is settled." I can almost forgive indignant excellence for insulting the public, in its turn, with the production of a *Roscia*, in the infantine pertness of Miss Mudie.

CHAP. IV.

Colman's Theatre.—Poor Suett.—The Village.—Fracas.—Elliston and Matthews.—The former compared to Achilles!—How an audience should be addressed.—Dowton.—The Tailors.—Death.—Retreat of the ten thousand.—Masters of the Order.—Winter of 1805-6.—*Zanga.—Gloster.—Rowe really does imitate Shakspeare in Shore.—Proofs in abundance.—Betty's Return.—Receipts contrasted.—Mr. Hargrave.—Betty in Brobdignag.—Season of* 1806-7.—*The Triumph of Coriolanus.—Thomson.—Siddons.—Insult, how noticed by Kemble.—Theodore Hook.—Tekeli.—Mother Goose.—Isaac Reed.—Tobin's Curfew.—Letter to the author from Mr. Kemble.—Noel Desenfans, esq.*

Mr. Colman now disposed of a part of the Haymarket Theatre to his brother-in-law, Mr. Morris, Mr. Winston, an old stager, and an attorney of the name of Tahourdine; a circumstance greatly indeed to be regretted; but I apprehend, at the time, unavoidable. I frankly confess, that I could have wished a property created by genius, continued and perpetuated by genius, had still kept itself from the contamination of bargain, and sale, and commercial speculation. But "who can control his fate?" The genius who now held it, certainly not inferior to his predecessors, had a mind of so singular a cast, that he rather courted difficulty than avoided it. He paid at least twice over for every hundred pounds he obtained; and, to use his own figure, could not avoid the *circuitous* in any thing. "If you wanted to be in the pit of the Opera," said he, "you would *cross* the street where we now stand; a thing *impossible* to ME." A much loved friend of my youth had offered me the use of ten thousand pounds, for any theatrical speculation that I inclined to, dividing the profits with me. I mentioned the circumstance to Colman—He laughed and said "he had too much regard for me." "My dear fellow, I will not allow a *friend* to share my difficulties with me." In his usual way, he added a pleasantry relative to Sheridan's recent partner, which from delicacy I suppress. I should explain, that this had no reference whatever to the present arrangement, which, I be-

lieve, *then* had never been even thought of. For many reasons I wish he had been less scrupulous. Bred a man of business, I could have aided his talent where alone he *wanted* help; and at the present moment Colman's theatre would have been his *own* house.

It had been an object of sincere regret to the lovers alike of comedy and opera, to see that Suett was rapidly sinking into the grave. I am silent over a man's indiscretions, when they do not clash with his professional duties—I have no right to pursue him into private life, and measure the progress of a destructive habit. Mr. Suett was a victim to nervous irritability. In our happy *symposium*, at Colman's theatre, a slight refection was for some time taken in the carpenter's room, where there was a regular president for the two hours of our sittings, and where, from Sheridan to very humble names indeed, the authors and patrons of the theatre mixed in the highest good humour with the performers of both sexes, acting on any particular evening. The greatest decorum prevailed. On one of these nights, I remember, I was president, and sat decorated with the ribband and the medal; and poor Suett drew his seat next to my throne. He was uncalled for a few minutes, during which he gave me a most curious and unaffected detail of the *horrors* that invaded him nightly, whenever sleep surprised him, and left his fancy "to sport at will her wild creations." I solemnly declare that no powers, of even German invention, have yet given a series of images so terrific, nor displayed so graphically, as was this record of miseries sustained by Suett.

"I was afraid, methinks, to hear him tell it."

Poor fellow, he was buried on the 15th of July, in the burying-ground on the north side of St. Paul's Cathedral. He was attended to his grave by his two sons, and four private friends, with a considerable number of his theatrical brethren. Suett had received the rudiments of his musical education in her majesty's choir; and the Queen's boys were consequently in attendance, and, with the assistance of some professional singers, an Anthem was intended, and expected by a numerous assemblage of persons "who loved him living, and his memory when dead." But it was found that the design, if persisted in, would incur additional *fees* to the cathedral, amounting to THIRTY-EIGHT pounds, and it would, I suppose, have "*profaned* the service of the dead to sing a requiem," unless the established fees had been conceded to the chapter.

The age inscribed upon the coffin of Richard Suett, was

forty-seven. No *spleen* in human nature could resist him, but his *own*.

Perhaps few places of public amusement, generally speaking, could boast of more harmony in the green-room than the little theatre. But a ludicrous instance of human frailty started forward on the following occasion. The late Mr. Cherry, a man of talent, had undertaken to dispel that delusion, (of *poetry*, surely, rather than life,) that the *country* is the seat of the virtues. In a comedy, called the *Village*, or the World's Epitome, he displayed what few villages, I believe, are too small to contain, *coquetry*, *selfishness*, and *litigation*. Two London adventurers, who sought for simplicity and purity *out* of town, return convinced that the village is only the *miniature* of the metropolis. Alas! it is not even THAT!

The piece was only just "glossed over" on the first night; on the second its fate was sealed; another play was to be given out, when on the stage rushed Elliston, and in his *confidential* style said to the spectators—"I am so much *agitated* on account of the TREATMENT I have received *behind* the scenes that I cannot NOW speak; but I will *shortly* address you."

Great consternation arose in the house upon this intimation. What the treatment could have been was a profound mystery; they looked curiously at the actor's person;—nothing about him seemed *ruffled* but his temper. While Mr. Elliston was recovering himself, a gentleman from the boxes, or an *imitation* by Matthews, called out to him—"Mr. Elliston, take care what you do." The admonition had all the effect of superior power. He at length told them, that "*no consideration whatever* should deter him from *speaking* the TRUTH," (which produced the loudest applause from an almost bursting *curiosity*.) But he never said one word as to the TREATMENT which had *so agitated* him; and only sonorously declaimed upon "the *triple* duty that he owed to the audience, the proprietors, and the author." He "solemnly declared," that "on the first night he had given the piece out contrary to his OWN opinion, and now, finding the house decidedly against it, he begged to substitute the *Dramatist* for the following night."

Every classic reader will here be reminded of the effect of Pallas upon the equally enraged Achilles; and rejoice that hostilities were not pursued in public by Mr. Elliston. Dryden's four lines of translation add the beauty of *reluctance* to the action by which Homer testifies the hero's obedience to the goddess.

"The gods are just, and when, subduing *sense*,*
We serve their pow'rs, provide the recompense.
He said; with *surly* faith believ'd the word,
And in the sheath, *reluctant*, plung'd the sword."†

What produced all this, it is said, was a hint from the manager that, had *other* actors done their duty, as he *himself* had, the result would have been *different*.

Our pleasant friend Matthews set out in life with a solid principle, "never to *give* an affront, nor *bear* one." He accordingly retorted that, in his opinion, "all concerned had done their duty equally well with Mr. Elliston, and some even *better*." I believe he never, like Brutus, softened the term by a query—"*Did* I say better?

Elliston here used, I am afraid, the only *other* word which, like hell, is never mentioned in a polite ear; and, it was said, that he was immediately *knocked down*. As a story usually gains by telling it, the manager was said to have *repeated* his provocation and his fall. But, at a distance from the event, it seems singular that the great pride should have been to *keep his legs* under an assault. He himself admits an *altercation* attended with some *warmth*;—says nothing whatever as to any *blow* given or returned; but as to being *knocked down*, asserts that "those who know him best must be sensible, that he is not likely *to be seen* in any such state of *degradation*."

To confirm his words, out flew not "millions of flaming swords," but a declaration, putting a decided negative upon the *knocking down*; and signed by Robert Palmer, Charles Taylor, John Palmer, W. T. P. Hutton, and the prompter, F. G. Waldron. It was dated the 21st of July, 1805.

I should never have thought this worthy of notice, but that it may help me to repress a growing evil. An actor, who feels in himself any remarkable fluency, is apt to get fond of addressing an audience:—if, in consequence of any dexterity, in this mock humility of appeal, he prevail upon the *noisy* to be quiet, or the *offended* to pardon, he may even court occasions to go on and talk to them: and thus it happened in the present instance; when a really *clever* man flies before them, without considering *what* he had to say—touches, because he

* *Feeling*, not *reason*.

† I will add that the word *plung'd* is the happiest that even Dryden could choose on this occasion;—its smartness, singly as it stands here, does more infinitely than "*sent* the blade *home* to its rest." It is a verb combining *passion* with *action*. It is not in Homer, whose sense is literally given by Pope. In the line preceding, however, they both, with an equal lack of *truth* and *taste*, omit the characteristic description—"χειρα βαρειαν.—Il. A. v. 219.

"The silver hilt his *ponderous hand* imprest."

could *not* address them, on a matter with which *they* had nothing to do—familiarly acquaints them with his *agitation*, but comforts their presumed eagerness to hear him with the promise that he would *shortly* address them.

Now all this proceeds from a mistake as to the relative position of the parties. Whoever are collected together in a theatre are to be treated by the actor as the PUBLIC. There ought to be always great *awe* in addressing such a body;—it should be as *seldom* done as possible, and always with infinite *respect*. They are to be treated as PATRONS whom you *reverence;* not even as FRIENDS, between whom passes a *reciprocation* of benefits; and least of all as CUSTOMERS, who are welcome to carry their money to *another* market, if they find your *bazar* incommodious, or your wares not durable, because badly manufactured. All *familiarity* on such occasions is as absurd as it is impudent. FLATTERY is the fulsome medium by which egotism seeks to gratify its busy importance. When Louis XV. passed Voltaire, after honouring with his presence the performance of Le Temple de la Gloire, "Eh! bien," said the poet, "TRAJAN, est-il *content?*" The monarch rebuked the indecorum, the flattery, and the vanity, by *not deigning to reply*.

I no sooner get clear of one nuisance, but another calls for notice. That excellent actor, Dowton, announced for his benefit, after the Birth-day, a burlesque piece, erroneously attributed to Foote, called the *Tailors*; or a Tragedy for *Warm* Weather. It was now the 15th of August. Dowton himself received menacing letters informing him that seventeen thousand tailors would attend to oppose the performance.—Now dividing that number by NINE, as it is usual, Dowton saw that it gave an aggregate of one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight men, and eight odd tailors, which at the Haymarket is a house, if they should not choose to be an *audience*. One "forcible Feeble," who signed himself DEATH, wrote to Winston, a proprietor, and stated that, in addition to the seventeen thousand which I have already disposed of in the pit and galleries, there should, if necessary, be ten thousand more ("GEESE, villain?") tailors, sir.

In the galleries nothing but tailors could be seen. The only rivals in the needle were two females, who might be *relations*, but here history is silent. As soon as Dowton presented himself in character, perfectly in character also, a pair of shears was thrown at him. He offered 20*l.* reward for the apprehension of the offender. Although 20*l.* might have almost tempted the *stones* to rise and inform against him, yet neither *Dung* nor *Flint* would "prate of his where-

about, or take the present *horror* from the time." They would say nothing, they would hear nothing—Dowton offered to substitute the Village Lawyer for the Tailors. They would not endure the word *Lawyer*—The LAW they had taken into their own hands,—they had been insulted, and breathed nothing but vengeance.

If such were the proceedings inside the theatre, *without* it was clear the menaces of DEATH were not to be disregarded. The door-keepers reported, that the *ten thousand* were arrived, and threatened to burst in. Mr. Graham, the magistrate, was sent for; he was a man of firmness and came immediately, with the officers from Bow-street; he made special constables of about *eight* stout men belonging to the theatre, and stationed his force at the proper points for effect. He wrote to the commanding officer of the Life Guards, requiring a full guard immediately, and that most excellent body was there in a few minutes, and the *retreat* of the ten thousand was speedily commenced.

Mr. Graham then seized the most conspicuous of the *internal* agitators, and, with one exception, they proved to be all tailors. *Sixteen* were admitted to bail in 50*l.* each, with two sureties in 40*l.* *Four* were remanded for want of bail, and "the *rest* they ran away," being discharged. In all these cases, the historian is bound to do strict justice. Had it been in the *beginning* of the week, there had been no *sacrifice* of their interest to their feeling; they would *none* of them have been at *work*. Mr. Dowton's night was Thursday, and yet they took their *measures* accordingly. A friend of mine is of opinion, that the *connivance*, if not the furtherance, of the MASTERS was secured on this occasion. I confess I am slow to suspect any such feeling in the *higher orders* of that respectable community. I have seen, to be sure, the rather eager exchange of the term *tailor*, for one not so tasteful;* I mean that of *clothier;* and am aware of the many instances, in which the original *lofty* seats have stooped to the *lower* house of parliament.

* "Not so *tasteful*."—The reader shall judge. The English word is derived from the French *tailleur;* that again from the verb *tailler*, which the French academy thus admirably explain. TAILLER, say they, "is to *cut*, to separate a *part* from any thing; to take from it the *superfluous;* in order to give it a certain *form* or *shape*, and *fit* it to a certain object." A definition certainly neither "inadequate nor delusive." And what is to CLOTHE? Why "to cover with *cloth*," simply; nothing more can be made of it. Here is no ART implied; no *cutting out;* no *form*, no *shape*, that is to add to grace where it exists, and bestow it where it is not. Worse than all, there is not the smallest hint, that the skilful operator always *takes away* the superfluous!

"Et quantum vertice ad auras
Ætherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.
MENS IMMOTA MANET." *Æneid*, IV. 445–9.

But the Haymarket had this season a prouder distinction than even tailors can confer—LISTON, from the Newcastle Theatre, made his first town appearance there on the 18th of June, in the character of John Lump. Nothing merits a more distinct examination than the success of this surprising actor. If Miss Tyrer had then whispered to him, that he should ever be in such estimation as to demand a salary of sixty pounds per week, he would have thought it equally probable for that morsel of woman to have attained his *own height*, or himself to have acquired that *mellow sweetness*, which charmed every ear in the voice of his future wife.

The winter campaign of 1805–6 opened rather strongly under Mr. Kemble. He played his Zanga with even increased effect, and brought that fine tragedy, the Revenge, still closer to the stage power of Shakspeare. Although the fond MANY had settled King Richard's diadem upon the head of Mr. Cooke, and it might not be even the *policy* of the management to try to disturb it, Mr. Kemble took the liberty to remind the town of his former *pretensions* to that crown; and he showed them how boldly he could both conceive and execute the character of the son of York, by quitting his former part of Hastings in Jane Shore, and assuming that of the Protector, Gloster.

Rowe in 1709 published an edition of Shakspeare, whose works, therefore, he may be presumed to have read, perhaps with more ambition to display their prominent *beauties* than critically to study the mechanism of his style, so as, in full possession of his secret, to become his imitator. However, four years after the appearance of his octavo edition of that great poet, he produced the celebrated tragedy of *Jane Shore*, written in professed imitation of the elder bard. Dr. Johnson says, "in what he thought himself an imitator of Shakspeare it is not easy to conceive." The doctor thinks that even the *numbers* and the *diction* are remote in the utmost degree from his manner. Perhaps he had no very distinct recollection of Rowe when he wrote this passage, for the diction is often not only similar, but *identical*. In the part of Gloster, and among his confederates, such instances abound. The very first speech in the play has two of these lines, and a great number may be traced by diligence and memory. As to *diction*, not to point out the miserable shifts of awkward *elisions* and strange *oaths*—"Beshrew me"—"y'have"—"'twere pity"—"go to!" and such *small deer*: there are pas-

sages so turned, that even memory is deceived by likeness. and considers them stolen from the stores of Shakspeare, till she ascertain her mistake by a fruitless search for them. I am afraid, however, he thought his resemblance most secure in *violated* metaphor.

> "But thus it is when rude calamity
> Lays its strong gripe upon these mincing minions;
> The dainty gew-gaw forms *dissolve* at once,
> And *shiver* at the shock."
>
> Act iii. Scene 1.

But it is sufficient to have hinted such matters to the eye of taste. The general reader may search however for better imitations than the following from Macbeth.

> "*Glost.*— Who can wonder
> If riot and misrule o'erturn the realm,
> When the *crown* sits *upon a baby brow?*"

> "*Glost.*—The council, (much I'm bound to thank 'em for 't,)
> Have *plac'd* a pageant *sceptre in my hand,*
> *Barren* of power."

The second passage may be illustrated by the original, because where he changes even a *word* in the line imitated, he cannot consent to lose it, but uses it immediately in the line following.

> "*Macb.*—Upon my head they *plac'd* a fruitless crown,
> And put a *barren sceptre in my gripe.*"

But the greatest effect made by Mr. Kemble in Gloster, was in a speech, which, to use a *Burkeism*, is Shakspeare "all over."

> "Behold my arm, thus *blasted, dry,* and *wither'd,*
> *Shrunk like a foul abortion,* and decay'd
> Like some *untimely product* of the seasons.
> This is the *sorcery of Edward's wife,*
> Who, in *conjunction with that harlot Shore,*
> And other like confed'rate *midnight hags,*
> By force of *potent spells,* of bloody characters,
> And *conjurations terrible to hear,*
> Call fiends and spectres from the *yawning deep,*
> And set the ministers of hell at work,
> To *torture* and *despoil* me of my life."

Sure I am, that had Cibber introduced the preceding into the 3d act of his Richard III. it would have had the fate of his own masterly speech upon *conscience,* and been spoken

and read as *genuine* Shakspeare to the end of the world. As to Kemble, the effect he produced in the passage cited was quite electrical. The way he *rush'd* upon the table, the sudden *baring* and *display* of his arm, and the overwhelming *energy* of the accusation, brought to mind some of the recorded explosions of Ciceronian vehemence.

Mrs. Siddons, I believe, at last *settled* to Shore; and Mrs. Litchfield consequently sustained Alicia; and, though somewhat alarmed at the mighty genius beside her, acted powerfully throughout. Charles Kemble now received the gentle Hastings into his care, and, with Hargrave in Shore, was greatly admired and applauded.

The young Roscius returned in the month of December to both theatres, but his attraction this season sensibly diminished. His greatest receipt was now 550*l.*—his lowest 227*l.* 15*s.* on Saturday the 15th of February. It was to his *Zanga*, and after Kemble's sublime effort, I imagine shame kept the people away. He was now held up with strong afterpieces too; the *Sleeping Beauty*, *Forty Thieves*, &c. They had frequently stronger houses without him. An average now taken of his twenty nights had sunk almost half from that of the first season—it was no more than 341*l.* 12*s.* 9*d.* per night. He acted Tancred for his benefit, on the 17th of May, and had only 301*l.* 14*s.* in his house; when Mrs. Jordan had 309*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.*; and Bannister 345*l.* 10*s.* 6*d.*; Miss Duncan 310*l.* 6*s.*; Mr. Braham 387*l.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

On the 23d of December, 1805, one of those things occurred that disgust a delicate mind, and render the stage a profession hardly liberal. Master Betty that night performed Achmet in Barbarossa. Just before the commencement of the 4th act, on came ingenuous Murray, to tell the house, that in consequence of the disapprobation of some part of the audience, Mr. Hargrave (Barbarossa! the man playing a part to *tear a cat in*) "had suddenly *withdrawn* himself from the theatre and could *not be found*."

Time has almost worn away from my mind the impressions of this gentleman's acting; but I think he was a sensible, judicious speaker, perhaps rather like Mr. Bensley. But the wantonness of a few idiots had driven him from his profession: he was *not* to be brought back. He had, again resembling Bensley, once been in the ARMY, and carried away from it the feelings of a gentleman; he could not submit to have them insulted by either folly or malignity, and therefore *returned* to his proper station.

While Betty was lord of the ascendant, a rather *Lilliput* arrangement was made for him in the theatre; but on his second voyage, (season,) like Gulliver, he foundered upon Brobdig-

nag, and saw himself in the power of giants. When he acted Gustavus, he was attended by Bennett and Cresswell, two of the tallest and largest men in the theatre. His mother was Mrs. St. Leger, a vast and towering figure, that overlaid all the *hero* in Gustavus. His fate in town was sealed. His fashionable worshippers, began to think the *old service* might be more truly rational—

> "Enchanting NOVELTY, that moon at full,
> That finds out every crevice of the head
> That is not sound and perfect, had in *theirs*
> Wrought the disturbance But the *wane* was near,
> And his *own* cattle must suffice him soon."

THE WINTER SEASON OF 1806-7—

Had one proud distinction, great beyond all modern rivalry, the revival, by Mr. Kemble, of Coriolanus. It has given a *cognomen* to Kemble; and remains at the head of his performances, and of the art itself, as one of those felicitous things where the actor is absolutely identified with the part, and it becomes impossible to think of either the character or the man, without reference to each other.

There were some circumstances, extraneous to the play itself, that yet contributed to the actor's triumph. The incumbrances on his fame, the trifling child's play that had amused the town, were no longer of any moment. He felt now assured of confirmed influence upon the public; "HOPE brightened his crest," and expanded his frame, and perhaps neither memory nor picture has, at any time, presented a more heroic figure than Mr. Kemble displayed, when he rushed upon the stage as Caius Marcius, on the 3d of November, 1806.

I certainly, however pleasing it would be to me, shall not go through the character to mark the passages most applauded, and best given. The great Roman lives in the wisest censure, and the tablet of the general memory is inscribed with his perfections. Mr. Kemble fully shares in Coriolanus with Shakspeare himself. But he gave one passage with sublime effect in this play to which Shakspeare can lay no claim—the author of it was the poet of the Seasons. It is addressed by Coriolanus to Aufidius, and is in the last scene:

> "'Tis not for such as thou—so often spared
> By her victorious sword, to speak of ROME,
> But with respect, and awful veneration.
> Whate'er her blots, whate'er her giddy factions,
> There is more VIRTUE in one single year
> Of Roman story, than your Volscian annals
> Can boast through ALL your *creeping dark duration.*"

This is indeed the true tone of tragedy; could he have held it, the fame of Rowe would have melted into *thin air* before him.

Nor will I omit one occasion of mentioning the NOBLE WOMAN, who, with sister excellence, performed the mother of Coriolanus. She indeed towered above her sex, and seemed worthy to bear about her the destinies of imperial Rome. From the first line to the last, all was coloured from one abstract principle; THAT, if Rome was the queen of nations, her sway was only commensurate with her COURAGE. This it was that taught her to glory in the *wounds* of victory, and to mock the feeble shrinking from the sight of blood.

> "*Vol.*— His bloody brow
> With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes.
> *Vir.*—His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood!
> *Vol.*—Away, you fool! it more *becomes* a man,
> Than *gilt* his trophy."

It really hurts one to remember that persons accomplished like the two great performers just mentioned, should ever have been subjected to insult, particularly at the proudest display of their beautiful and ennobling powers. But on the 18th of the month, at a repetition of this tragedy, and at the very moment when Mrs. Siddons was supplicating, as Volumnia, the conqueror, her son, to spare his country; when every eye should have been rivetted to the scene, every ear burning with the pure flame of patriot vehemence—at such a moment an *apple* was thrown upon the stage, and fell between Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble. He did not, nor would I have had him, quite dismiss the *character* he played for the *manager*, but, taking up the apple, he advanced indignantly to the front of the stage, and thus addressed the audience:—

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

"I have been many years acquainted with the benevolence and liberality of a London audience; but we cannot proceed this evening with the performance unless we are protected, especially when *ladies* are thus exposed to insult."

A person in the gallery called out—"We can't hear."

"Mr. Kemble, (*with increased spirit,*) "I will *raise* my voice, and the GALLERIES shall *hear* me." *(Great tumult.)*

"This protection is what the AUDIENCE owe it to themselves to *grant*—what the PERFORMERS, for the credit of their profession, have a right to *demand;* and WHAT I will venture so far to *assert*, that, on the part of the PROPRIETORS, I here offer a

hundred guineas to any man, who will disclose the *ruffian* who has been guilty of this act." (A murmur, only in the gallery.)

"I throw myself, ladies and gentlemen, upon the high sense of breeding, that distinguishes a London audience; and I hope I shall never be wanting in my duty to the public; but nothing shall induce me to suffer insult."

The gallery told him that this apple of discord was thrown at some of the *disorderly females* in the boxes, and only by accident fell upon the stage. Our MORAL friends, too, sent down a request, that those *riotous ladies* might be suppressed, and Mr. Kemble good naturedly promised "that all possible methods should be taken to keep them in order." And then the play was finished.

Under the second management of Wroughton, one of the most ingenious and pleasant men of his time, Theodore Hook, brought his melodrame of *Tekeli* before the public. His unfailing spirits, his whim, invention and versatility, his improvisation and keen discernment of character, have delighted me, years ago, in society; and seem now to be settling into some public and permanent fame. His Tekeli was admirably played.

Necessarily compelled to omit much novelty, and contract more, from the rapid approach of my assigned limits, I should never presume to lift my Christmas glance again towards the sacred symbol of druid superstition, were I capable of omitting the birth of Mother Goose, on the 28th of December, in Covent Garden Theatre. She is said to have been a disputed offspring, and claimed alike by Dibdin and by Farley—but she has yet superior honours, and derived her true efficacy from the nursery. She brought with her thence that wondrous bird, which, in the language of Lafontaine,

"Pondoit tous les jours un œuf-d'or."

In a word, the theatre never acquired a more favourite pantomime. Little Simmons, the *Roman*, thought himself honoured in Mother Goose.—Here, too, the Bolognas displayed unrivalled activity, and Grimaldi, who had been slighted at Drury Lane, at once proved himself the great master of his art.

I cannot well avoid another successful piece by Kenney, called False Alarms, or My Cousin—it was an opera performed at Drury Lane, for the first time, on the 12th of January, 1807, with immense applause. Braham composed his own songs, all of them still vocal, and he accompanied himself on the

grand piano forte, when he delivered to every warbler in the land the simple ballad, Said a Smile to a Tear. His accompaniment was one of those rattles in music called a *battery*—but his touch is very brilliant, like his style of singing, and he was hardly permitted to leave the instrument.

Mr. Kemble, about this time, had to regret the loss of his old friend, Isaac Reed, Esq. who died on Monday the 5th of January, 1807, having just completed the 65th year of his age. I used to meet him occasionally at Mr. Kemble's hospitable board, with such men as, either for instruction or amusement, will not easily be excelled, with Mr. Malone and Dr. Charles Burney. On such occasions Mr. Reed was always referred to for *exact* information. The recollection of Mr. Malone was general rather than minute; he rather knew where to *find* any thing than carried it about with him. Reed was a *repeater* as to time. You had only to touch the subject, he struck instantly and *truly*. He had a look of *severity*, though one of the gentlest of human beings: and sat with his countenance *declined*, and preserving an unaltered *frown*. He was the *shade* to the light manner of Mr. Malone, who talked of literature without a tinge of pedantry, with a seeming imitation of the *laughing* manner of Sir Joshua Reynolds. To draw an illustration from the manly game of cricket, which I still love to *see*,—Reed stood at the *wicket*, and either struck or stopt admirably. Malone sometimes *bowled* to him—but never took him *off* his guard, or caught him out. With a sort of a *run* and a *flourish* before he delivered his ball, he would thus address his stern antagonist: "I think the most important thing done for Shakspeare (always excepting our friend Dr. Farmer's Essay) was Tyrwhitt's use of that curious pamphlet, *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, which first appeared in the year 1592, or 1593." —Two! *struck* the accurate Reed.

Mr. Reed seemed to allow of Steevens's ascendancy without dispute. The latter used his chambers, his library, himself, in his literary schemes, without ceremony; and shy as Mr. Reed was at all times of seeing his name before the public, so as to declare "that if the pillory were the alternative, he believed he should prefer it,"—yet Steevens would shroud any thing he chose under the *well-known* editor of Dodsley's old plays; and his friend, if he ventured at times a murmur, was overborn by that plausibility which had not seldom governed the criticism of Doctor Johnson.

Few men exerted greater influence upon society than Isaac Reed. He had ably and steadily conducted his magazine for twenty-five years; and, amid all the changes of opinions,

adhered inflexibly to his own :—they led him to be the strenuous but enlightened defender of our CHURCH and STATE. The *extent* of his literary labours was prodigious; but, as it ought always to be, this was as nothing compared with that of his studies. His mind was the *spirit* of his library. He was indeed a treasure to Mr. Kemble, while forming his dramatic collection. To the stage he had paid an attention which has never been approached. I speak this on the fullest evidence, for his Notitia Dramatica are now lying before me.

To proceed with our theatrical notices. The Curfew of the excellent TOBIN fully ratified the judgment passed upon his Honey Moon. In thought, in diction, he was decidedly a poet. But he seems to have avoided every claim to originality—to have coveted the fame of a mimic, and to have been proud of his uncommon likeness to *other* people. He is in the Curfew like the Revenge—like the Castle Spectre—like the Battle of Hexham—like the Iron Chest—like the Children in the Wood—and the children of most dramatists. But his resemblance never distresses ; it is choice, not necessity, that borrows in Tobin ; and he covers all by a brilliant fancy and a mellifluous versification. The eagerness of the public to see this piece was extreme. It was finely acted, and but that it had a weak fifth act, might have yet remained a favourite upon our stage.

Whatever Mr. Kemble thought of the writers of modern comedy, they were often deeply indebted to his kindness ; and sometimes his performance absolutely saved a weak effort of an able man. It was thus that his Reuben Glenroy brought Morton through in his comedy of Town and Country. The play rose upon the town at every succeeding repetition, and became even popular at last, here and in the country.

The "tales of wonder" were not collected by Monk Lewis merely to *astound* the people for a time, and then, as Shakspeare expresses himself, "to fust unused"—from Lord Ronald, and the *grim white woman*, the little *lord* of the NURSERY constructed a new grand romantic melo-drama, called The Wood Dæmon, or the Clock has Struck. On its first night the *dialogue* seemed to have frequently emerged from the spot just mentioned ; but the childishness was omitted by the author's discretion, and the terrors became worthy of the grown followers of the marvellous.

> "Never shalt THOU and glory sunder!
> Child of wonder—child of WONDER."

Upon the close of the Covent Garden season on the 23d of June, with Hamlet and Mother Goose, Mr. Kemble left town on a visit to his kind friend, Lord Guilford, at Wroxton Abbey. While he was there I wrote him an account of poor DESENFANS' death, which happened on the 9th of July, 1807. He thus noticed the communication.

(COPY.)

"*Wroxton Abbey, July 14th*, 1807.

"MY DEAR BOADEN,

"So little am I a man of this world, that, I believe, it is nearly a fortnight since I have looked into a public print; consequently your kind letter was the first intimation I had of the decease of our excellent friend. Knowing, as I did, the state of his health for some time before I left London; and having, indeed, for years observed with pain the progress of his maladies, it is without surprise, and as far as regards poor Desenfans himself, without sorrow, that I hear of his release from his protracted and insupportable sufferings. May the innocency of his mind, and the benevolence of his heart, meet that reward which is prepared for the virtuous in a state of perfect and perpetual bliss!

"I write to Sir Francis by this post:—he has lost an old friend, and I feel keenly for him.

"Lord Guilford begs his kindest remembrances to you. Believe me always, my dear Boaden,

"Yours truly,

"J. P. KEMBLE."

What the recent grief of Burke stated of the excellent Sir Joshua Reynolds, was in degree applicable to Noel Desenfans. "He was the centre of a very great variety of agreeable societies, which were dissipated by his death." He delighted to receive his friends; and he entertained them with elegance, and even splendour. The room in which he dined was decorated, so as to defy a parallel even in the mansions of our nobles. We were surrounded by *thirteen* historical subjects by POUSSIN, painted in the finest time of that classic artist.

If ever man possessed the faculty of rendering society tasteful and happy, it was Desenfans. He was too well bred to be the hero of his own table—the charm he possessed was the absence of *self* display, exchanged for the address to draw forth the talents of *others*. He could continue any subject first as long as it pleased, and change it without any appearing check or abruptness. In the midst of great bodily sufferings, he

excelled ALL in hilarity, and the goodness of his nature impressed his countenance with uniform benevolence.

Mr. Desenfans in early life had distinguished himself in polite letters, so as to have received the applause of Voltaire and Rousseau. He was proud, as he well might be, of the great men of his country; but had lived long enough among us to have acquired the true feeling for English genius. His infirmities confined him, for the most part, to the house, but his curiosity was insatiable after every object of liberal science; and his friend Sir Francis Bourgeois, who mixed largely in active life, on his return home, delighted to lay before him his daily gleanings from the world without.

Of his taste in painting, the collection bestowed by Sir Francis, in pursuance of his pleasure, upon Dulwich College, will be at once a record and a monument. Magnificent as his collection certainly was, one *desideratum* the writer of this faint tribute was so fortunate as to supply. He had great satisfaction in seeing before him the portraits of LOUIS the *Fourteenth* and BOILEAU. Chance, during the progress of the French Revolution, led me to purchase of an emigrant Rigaud's portrait of RACINE. He was so good as to accept from me the other great poet of that reign, whom the King had joined with Boileau in the task of recording his glories; and Mr. Desenfans was made infinitely happier by the present, than Racine was by the appointment.

CHAP. V.

Charles Young—His first Hamlet.—Rights of the winter patentees defined—In law—In equity.—Their danger—Their errors.—The stage.—Mrs. H. Johnston's return.—Violent clamour.—Discussion.—Charles Kemble's Wanderer.—Miss Smith.—Her intelligence.—Begone Dull Care.—The World.—The comedy of Errors.—Retirements.—Miss Pope—Her merits.—Inimitable burlesque of tragedy.—Storace.—Mrs. Mattocks.—Both quit the profession.—The steadiness of Cooke.—The miserable conflagration of the theatre.

I STEP a little back in my narrative to have the pleasure of noticing the first performance in town of Charles Young, and in the character of Hamlet. My amiable and accomplished friend. Mr. R. Westall, I remember, begged that we might see this debût together: he had a side-box at the Haymarket on that night, and we received very great satisfaction from that able and judicious actor. Confessedly, however, it was the Hamlet of Kemble; discriminated only by the personal perfections, or, if you will, imperfections of the performer. It was not so philosophic, but more solemn—there was more vehemence and less pathos—the volume of voice was great, and of good tone, but the articulation was not nice, and he laboured under a lisp whenever the letter *s* occurred. But there was great ardour, vast animation, powerful action, untiring energy, and good sense. We were able very sincerely to congratulate him, upon what announced, to *such* a man, the certainty of fame and fortune. Mrs. Litchfield was the *Gertrude* of the play, and the best that I have seen.

I do not anticipate any occasion for a more minute discussion of the subject, and therefore during a rather considerable "blank of *nature's* works" at the theatres, I am tempted to look into the PATENT RIGHTS of the winter proprietors. The evil which I predicted, from the error as to the Royalty, had fearfully increased; the non-descript minor theatres became seriously alarming, if they even failed; ruinous, if they succeeded. Every body knows, without touching upon the public amusements of families, that it is not indif-

ferent to the evening wanderer, whether he pays a shilling *more* for his entertainment, or a shilling *less*; that of so numerous a crowd, many are not nice, so as they are amused, and some, from their kind of bringing up, actually prefer the coarser entertainment. To open, therefore, ANY places of amusement, must injure the play-house. What other injury it may do, may be left to the imagination, if indeed such a question cannot be more accurately resolved by the memory.

The patentees at length felt themselves seriously bound to submit their case to their legal advisers, and counsel were of opinion—"THAT they might and ought to put down the encroachments upon their property—THAT his majesty having graciously made his election by *patent appointment*, as to *what* theatres should exist in Westminster, the Lord Chamberlain *cannot* infringe on those patents, or *legally* license any other place for *theatrical* representations, without the *consent* of the patented theatres. And certain it is, that, from the day the first royal patent was granted to old Drury, through the whole of Mr. Garrick's time, and ever since, until the chamberlainship of Lord Salisbury, the uniform practice at the Chamberlain's office was, to *refuse* to listen to an application even for a *single night*, though for a charity benefit, unless the party applying brought with them the *previous consent*, in writing, of proprietors of the established theatres." So much for the LEGAL right, grounded on patent, confirmed by usage.

But let us look a little at their title in EQUITY; by which it must appear that the Lord Chamberlain, even, ex officio, if the right were *in* him, is *bound* by positive covenant *not to grant* any new license for any dramatic exhibition—FOR, after the result of a long discussion and arbitration, a regular deed was executed, styled the FINAL ARRANGEMENT, recognizing and guaranteeing the exclusive rights of the three established theatres, which deed received the sanction of his majesty, and was signed, under his royal pleasure, by his Chamberlain, the Marquis of Salisbury; it was also honoured by the concurrence of his royal highness the Prince of Wales, who signed it himself, as did also his grace the late Duke of Bedford.

On the faith of this settlement, so guaranteed, the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre received from the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre fifteen thousand pounds for their dormant patent. The king's theatre in the Haymarket contributed thirty thousand pounds, on recovering its license, to the losses of the Pantheon Opera undertaking; and FINALLY, this deed formed the whole foundation for the rebuilding of

Drury Lane Theatre, in which undertaking a property of not less than three hundred thousand pounds has been embarked, all in the *confidence* and on the *faith* of this arrangement, secured under such high authority.

Now with this irrefragable document before them, the reason of the public will have no difficulty whatever as to the *actual* RIGHTS of the patentees. How these have been evaded, or compromised, or dropped, would be a tedious inquiry, and very unfit for a work like this, drawing necessarily to its close. But if, on the statement of *then* existing circumstances, the grievance seems to be as unaccountable as it was oppressive, what will be said of their case, when a few revolving months shall have added the unparalleled calamity of two royal theatres, erected or renewed at immense expense, being both totally destroyed by fire, within 157 days of each other?

I know the humble pretences and earnest assurances by which, at first, office is surprised into innovation; and the favourable plea that is generated when once property has been embarked. But I must contend, that in the case above stated, a positive CHARTER was conferred, and has been violated nearly with impunity.

But in all such matters we must not look solely to individuals, who may be considered, in the harshest view of their case, as highly *favoured* trustees for the public. The *interests* of that public, as they originated the trust, under the benevolence of the sovereign, so they are, and should be, paramount to any individual advantages; and the state, if it forfeited the grant for any abuses of its enjoyment, could compensate, if it was judged expedient, any pecuniary suffering. But how should such abuses exist, and have they ever been for a moment pretended? The Lord Chamberlain, by his office, licenses every production of the stage—and bending slightly, as the managers of theatres must do, to the humours and fashions of the day, (still, even so doing, under superior sanction,) will any writer venture to assert, with reading beyond a horn-book, that the productions a century ago were not infinitely more gross in their plans, and more loose and even profane in their expression, than any thing exhibited in our own times? I do not claim for MANAGERS the whole credit of such a reformation; I believe it may be, in a great degree, the better taste of the present day; which, whether substantially or not improved in virtue, (I hope even THAT,) is unquestionably more averse to the *public* expression of either profaneness or indelicacy. The proprietors, then, have not, by any moral turpitude or indifference, or

want of judgment, merited the evils which they sustain; or the fearful ruin in their prospect, opposed, as they must be, by so many tempting rival exhibitions.

That I have thought them blamable in many points, I have occasionally said, with that feeling for the stage itself, which he who had it not, would indeed be unworthy to occupy it. In my judgment, they erred in any *very* considerable enlargement of their houses. It was not likely, that a structure calculated to hold more than 400*l.* nightly, would be *fitted* for that best triumph of the actor's art, the general sight of his expression, the perfect enjoyment of his declamation. A thousand nice *shades* of the one, and almost all the *taste* of the other, are destroyed by a vast space, across which they cannot pierce; and therefore, as hopeless efforts, they are at last discontinued. Rant and grimace are the ordinary substitutes. As a proof that, sometimes, TASTE and INTEREST go together, all the losses of the proprietors *commenced* in their large theatres—I had almost said *proceeded* from them.—Enough, however, on this subject for the present. If my notion be incorrect, it is but the sentiment of an individual to whom no great influence attaches any way, that I know of. According to my measure, I certainly *endeavour* to think rightly, upon this and all subjects—I can only, however, assert the integrity of my motives.

I return to the stage itself with but little pleasure, for, in addition to the "blank of nature's works" in the drama, the present season made a most fearful one in her representatives, by retirements which have, to the present hour, never been replaced. Previous to attending the departure of three excellent actresses, whom I had the pleasure to know, I have to mention the return of Mrs. H. Johnston to Covent Garden Theatre, on the 30th of December, after an absence of two years. Beatrice was not exactly the part that I should have chosen in her situation—it is too violently pert, too decidedly *haggard* and reckless. In the present instance it bespoke *assurance* under a sense of indiscretion, and provoked rather than soothed any irritation against her.

It will always be a disputed question, whether the public have any right to *refer* to the private conduct of those whose talents are displayed for their amusement. I neither remember the particular allegations made against Mrs. H. Johnston, nor the very opposite statements by her and her husband. I am rather disposed to look a little at the *principle* of public censure with relation to the professors of the stage. Let us state an extreme case, which, as it never *may* have occurred, so it never may be likely to occur, where this check

exists. Let us suppose an actress of the greatest, or of humbler powers, a wife and a mother :—let us suppose such a woman notoriously light while she remains with these ties, and utterly shameless when she throws them off ;—let us see her, under the protection, as it is called, of wealth and fashion, becoming again a parent ; and, under many changes, renewing that sacred character, but with a total indifference to the children, lawful or unlawful, which she has produced ;—let us further suppose, (for there is a *necessity* for this supposition to warrant the *notice,*) that these are facts as well known as the theatre which they sully, and as capable of proof as any miserable larceny that peoples either our prisons or our remote settlements :—is a public to be told, that it has in such a case no jurisdiction ; that its sole duty is to enjoy its amusement, whether to *weep* or *laugh,* while it encourages infamy in its course, and makes harder by its indifference even the callous heart ? What is the great corrector of life ? Public opinion. What most deters crime ? Public opinion. But it may be said, the culprit is not *single* in her offence :—Perhaps not. But if there exist instances by thousands which you *cannot* reach, are you for that reason to spare the offender whom you can ? Nay, more, are you to fawn upon the talent, while you loathe its possessor ? Are you to worship, by the glare of the stage, that WANTON, whose exploits, in the public journals, cannot be read by decency at your breakfast table ? I leave the VIRTUOUS and the RATIONAL of society to reply to the question. But I beg pardon of the reader ; I have been too long detained from Mrs. Johnston. A perfect yell of fury burst out on her appearance ; evidently private vengeance, rather than public justice :—the great mass of the spectators was confessedly unprejudiced, and therefore humane, if not favourable. Poor creature, she seemed convulsed with emotion, breathless and incapable of utterance, dying almost where she stood. Suddenly, however, she sprung forward to the front of the stage, and lifting up her clasped hands, silently besought the mercy or protection of the house. It was afforded, and she struggled with difficulty through the character and the evening. On the 8th of the following month, having prepared her way in the newspapers, she made a second appearance, in Letitia Hardy, in the Belle's Stratagem. A stronger force was now embodied against her ; both sides were prepared. The uproar was terrific, the actress was bathed in tears, but collected ; she advanced, and her action procured attention to what she would say—she told the audience that in "*many* instances she had been much wronged, and endured much unmerited reproach."

Another clamour in the shape of *denial*, was shouted against her. The spectators, however, wanting the play, it proceeded, except when any point in the dialogue offered an opportunity to her persecutors. Upon the fine burst of Miss Hardy, as to what she would do for a HUSBAND "*worthy* of her love," the gale became a perfect hurricane, as might naturally be expected. She found it impossible to recover her powers, so as to do even *her* slender justice to the character; and the evening of the 8th of January afforded no enjoyment, unless to the *least* MANLY part of the audience.

On the 12th of January, 1808, Charles Kemble got up from the French a drama, in three acts, called The Wanderer. It afforded some striking opportunities to Miss Smith, a young lady of fine talents, with a face of very powerful expression, and in its effect a good deal like that of Mrs. Siddons. The *intelligence* of her look was amazing. She had made studies of no mean extent in her art, and ought always to have superseded the annoyance, not necessity, of a vast crowd of young ladies, annually "piping their hysteric changes on Juliets and Dorindas, Pollys and Ophelias." This lady is the present Mrs. Bartley :—it may be agreeable to her to know, that a very attentive observer of the stage, for more than FORTY years, still thinks of her *mute* expression of the PASSIONS with unabated pleasure. Her action was beautifully appropriate, and at every change, she composed her figure into a position so graceful, as to seem the prepared study of some profound artist.

Lest her rivals, in the most jealous of all professions, should suppose this the tribute of private friendship, I guard it by the declaration, that, off the stage, even her person is unknown to me; and that to the present hour I have never had the honour of speaking to her.

I could wish to be able to afford more than a passing word to the comedy of Begone dull Care, and a much better one called The World, by Kenney. The Two Gentlemen of Verona, purified by Mr. Kemble, and splendidly decorated, though acted by himself and Pope, and Miss Smith, and Miss Norton, with the rich comedy of Liston, Munden, and Blanchard, was a revival that might as well have slept undisturbed; for, except a few prettinesses in the dialogue, it is, though Shakspeare, Samson shorn of his vigour, and trifling in the flowery lap of Dalilah.

On the 26th of May, Miss Pope, the dramatic heiress of Kitty Clive, *the* chambermaid *par eminence*, quitted Drury Lane Theatre, and the profession of which she was so great a mistress. She acted for the first, and *only* time, Deborah

Dowlas in Colman's Heir at Law; and I imagine he supplied the few lines, which she spoke after the play in the character of Audrey, wherein she truly said, that "she had parted with *Touchstone* (King), and was now come to part with her *other* friends." They were, on that night, uncommonly numerous and brilliant, and kind, and she received their last applause wisely, without claiming or needing a particle of their indulgence. Yet she had continued to act on the stage of Drury Lane for a period of *more* than FIFTY years.

Clive, when she was young, paid the highest compliment to Miss Pope's understanding; for when she was going on the stage, to act, for the second time, Corinna in the Confederacy, she said to her, "My dear Pope, you played for a young actress particularly well on your first night—You must now endeavour to act still *better*, and yet expect to meet with *less* applause. It is proper you should be told this, lest disappointment *damp* your spirits, and sink you below *yourself*."

On the 6th of May, 1802, their Majesties commanded her to act Mrs. Heidelberg, in the Clandestine Marriage, for the express purpose of seeing how she could replace, in that part, the admirable Clive. She was at this time the only surviving performer of its original cast.

Perhaps her fame, like all other reputation, will rest most securely upon *truth*. She, as an actress, "held the mirror [steadily] up to nature." Yet she had a singularly fine talent for burlesque. The critic of my standing touches upon a style in female tragedy, which has long been discontinued: it resulted from the fashion of the dress—it might be called the swimming or voluptuous; and the actress seemed to totter under the weight of her *superior* charms. The spectator's eye was attracted to the visible palpitations of the heroine: and as the spread of the hoop below kept the arms in a nearly constant movement of floating grace,—the hand, more frequently than it is now, was prest upon the bosom: it was the MODE, and *perhaps* perfectly decorous. Mrs. Siddons never *thought* it so; and from the external quiet of that seat of emotion was most stupidly indeed alleged to *feel* really nothing while on the stage. What *should*, or *can* be felt by any perfect artist, has been thoroughly discussed by nobody but *Diderot*. But to return to Miss Pope; with the usual sauciness of *comedy* towards her imperious sister, she had looked attentively at all this discipline of the former queens of the stage: and in Tilburina in the Critic let her personal satire fly at the *moving* charms of her earlier days. Mrs. Crawford must have been ready to *expire* at this burlesque, in all the exquisite approaches, the jets and balances, swoonings and ravings

of Tilburina. Of late years the ridicule seemed misplaced, for it was like nothing that the young had ever seen in tragedy.

On the 30th of the same month, Madame Storace, the unapproachable *buffa* of English opera and musical farce, also took leave. She actually made, as Shakspeare has it, "a swan-like end, dying in music," for she warbled her farewell in two dozen most applicable lines, written for her by Colman: but strong as she certainly was, she had miscalculated her force; the last line—"Farewell—and bless you all for ever," quite subdued her; and she was born off the stage in a senseless state.

Mrs. Mattocks, eight days after this, withdrew herself from the stage of Covent Garden. The play was the Wonder, and it was one truly, as to *first* appearance as well as *last*. Mrs. Mattocks acted Flora with all her original sprightliness, though she had been an actress close upon *sixty* years. Mr. Cooke acted for her Don Felix, being his first appearance in the fiery Spaniard—Emery, then first in town, tried to convert his genuine *York* into broad Scotch—and Miss Smith then began to sustain Violante with delicacy and point. Poor Cooke had no shyness in promising his aid on kind occasions like the present, only he sometimes too obviously needed *help* himself. But here he *would* do, and he did do, ALL nobly. After the play, he recited Garrick's ode to Shakspeare; and, retiring for an instant, returned leading in Mrs. Mattocks. Through the whole of her address, which was in plain prose, thanking the audience for the public favour of 58 years, Mr. Cooke *supported* her. A rather too solemn announcement of "preparation for the journey which we must all take" almost overpowered her; but she recovered enough to make her most scientific and graceful courtesies to the house; and her *steady* friend led her off the stage, with all the honours that could crown so valuable an actress.

As to successor, she has had none—her *widows* renounce administration, and the *Mac Tabs* have retired to their native seats; where they may be presumed, with somewhat less *effect*, to value themselves equally upon the *antiquity* of their families.

The most disastrous of seasons commenced at Covent Garden Theatre on the 12th of September, 1808. The entertainments of the evening were Macbeth and Raising the Wind. Mr. Kemble had been unwell, but was now quite recovered. Mrs. Siddons had not acted for many months; indeed a notion was abroad that she had absolutely retired from the stage. She had, however, returned to it in the best health, and at all

events, in such characters as were now preferred, with even *augmented power*, the silent operation of experience and time. Together, these incomparable tragedians seldom failed in their efficacy upon the town: and an audience piled to the roof attested the attraction of Shakspeare and themselves. In eight days from this "great feast" of dramatic excellence, the splendid site of the triumph was a mass of flaming ruins.

DESTRUCTION OF COVENT GARDEN THEATRE.

About four o'clock in the morning of September the 20th, this extensive building was discovered to be in flames; and so fierce and rapid was the fire, that no exertion could stop its course. Within less than three hours after its commencement, the whole of the interior was destroyed: nearly all the scenery, wardrobe, musical and dramatic libraries, and properties of all kinds, were a heap of smoking ruins. A considerable number of engines promptly attended, but there was a total want of water for some time, the main pipe having been cut off with the intention of laying down a new one, and above an hour elapsed before the engines could be supplied. They afterwards played with the greatest possible effect for more than an hour; when the roof of the theatre fell in with a dreadful crash, and thus announced the destruction of the interior of the building. The fire raged with most violence at the upper end of Bow-street, on the western side of which seven houses were destroyed, including the public-house called the Strugglers. In Hart-street the flames communicated to the houses on the opposite side of the street from the theatre, and four of them caught fire at the same moment; but, by the great activity of the people and firemen, they suffered little more than a severe scorching. Great apprehensions were entertained for the safety of Drury Lane Theatre, as the flakes of fire were carried by the wind with much force in that direction. A great number of people mounted the roof, ready, in case of actual fire, to open the large cistern of water provided there. All the people in the neighbourhood were employed with their servants in extinguishing the flakes of fire as they fell upon the roofs or in the yards. This was the whole extent of injury sustained in the neighbourhood: but the theatre itself was totally consumed. The Ship tavern, and part of Mr. Brandon's, the box-keeper's office, were all that remained at that angle.

The most painful part of this disastrous event remains to be described. At an early stage of the fire, a party of fire-

men broke open the great door under the Piazza, Covent Garden; and having introduced an engine into the passage, they directed it towards the galleries, where the fire appeared to burn more fiercely; when, dreadful to relate, the burning roof of the passage fell in, and buried them, with several others who had rushed in along with them, in the ruins. It was a considerable time before the rubbish, which now blocked up the door, could be cleared away. When it was effected, a miserable spectacle presented itself—the mangled bodies of the dead and dying appearing through the rubbish, or being discovered in each advance to remove it. At twelve o'clock eleven dead bodies had been removed into the churchyard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden. Three of them were firemen belonging to the Phœnix Fire-office. Some were sent to the Middlesex Hospital, miserably mangled, with broken limbs, and dreadful bruises. Several respectable young men having approached too near the flames, perished by the steam which arose from the burning ruins upon which the engines were playing. The number of persons whose lives were unfortunately sacrificed to their activity and assiduity amounted to 20. Many others (more perhaps in number) were severely and dangerously wounded. The insurances on the house did not exceed 50,000*l.* and the savings from the Shakspeare premises about 3,500*l.* more; the whole not more than one-fourth part of the sum requisite to replace the theatre. The *actual loss* was immense; besides the usual stock of scenery, there was an additional quantity for a new melo-drama, which was shortly to have been brought forward. Of the originals of the music of Handel, Arne, and many other eminent composers, there were no copies; and of many other pieces of music an outline only had been given. Some excellent dramatic productions, the property of the theatre, were also lost for ever.

The Bedford and Piazza Coffee-houses escaped the flames, owing to a wall which had been erected by the proprietors of the theatre a short time before, to guard *themselves* from the danger of the adjoining premises. Another accident happened on the Wednesday, by the falling of a wall in Hart-street, which killed one man, and bruised several others. They had been warned of their danger, but disregarded it.

The organ, left by Handel as a legacy to the theatre, stated to be worth upwards of 1000 guineas, and which was only used for the oratorios, was consumed. The Beef-Steak Club, which held its meetings at the top of the theatre, lost their stock of wines, valued at 1500*l.* Mr. Ware, the leader of the band, lost a violin worth 300*l.*, which had been left behind

that night for the first time in two years. Mr. Munden, his wardrobe, not to be replaced under 800*l.* Miss Bolton, her jewels; and the other performers property, in the aggregate, to a considerable amount. Some of the private houses were not ensured, and others but partially. The receipts of the preceding night's performance, with the books and papers belonging to Mr. Brandon's office, were the only property of consequence belonging to the theatre saved. It is almost too painful to describe the situation of those persons who were dug out of the the ruins alive; they were, in general, so dreadfully burned, as scarcely to be recognised by their nearest relatives, and their flesh, in several instances, literally peeled from off the bone. The dead bodies taken from the same place were nearly shapeless trunks. An immense concourse of spectators thronged all the avenues to the ruins on the three first days; and among the nobility who visited the coffee-houses adjoining, were the Dukes of York and Cambridge, Marquis Tweedale, &c. Too much praise cannot be bestowed on the prompt attendance and active exertions of the volunteer corps, who prevented many depredations.

Twelve persons perished by the falling in of the Apollo Room, viz.:—R. Cadger, J. Holmes, J. Hunt, W. Jones, J. Evans, J. Crabb, T. Mead, W. Wrigglesworth, J. Kilby, T. James, and two more whose names were unknown.

J. Sayers, a fireman of the Phœnix Insurance Company; Mr. Hewitt, a plumber; J. Beaumont, a private in the 1st Guards; T. Harris, jun., of Hyde-street, optician; R. Bird, a coach-maker; J. Pilkins, a labourer; Steevens, an engineer of the Phœnix, died in St. Thomas's Hospital; a second private of the 1st Guards, in the greatest agonies, at the Military Hospital; Musket and Fish, two other firemen of the Phœnix, in St. Thomas's Hospital.

Let it be remembered that all these sufferers perished, from that ardour that made them disdain their personal security. They left a melancholy feeling indeed in the breasts of the proprietors of the theatre, who all declared, that their losses as to property, immense as that was in its amount, were in their estimation trifling, compared with such a *sacrifice* of the brave, the humane men, who perished for them. A subscription was immediately opened for the pecuniary relief of their families.

In the morning after the fire, as soon as I had breakfasted, I hastened to Great Russel street, to ascertain the state of the sufferers, and give any little aid that I might be able to render. Honest John Rousham in silence let me in, and walked up stairs before me into Mr. Kemble's dressing-room,

He was standing before the glass, totally absorbed, and yet at intervals endeavouring to shave himself.

Mrs. Kemble was sitting in tears upon a sofa, and on seeing me, exclaimed, "O Mr. Boaden, we are totally ruined, and have the world to begin again!"

His brother Charles, wrapt up just as he came from the fire, was sitting *attentive*, upon the end of the sofa;—and a gentleman, much attached to Mr. Harris, who in and about the theatre was familiarly styled *old Dives*, with his back to the wall, and leaning upon his cane, sat frowning in a corner. It was not a situation that called for speech; our salutations were like those at a funeral. I took a chair, and sat observing the manner and the look of Kemble. Nothing could be more natural than for Mrs. Kemble to feel and think of their *personal* loss in this dreadful calamity. Her husband, I am convinced, while I saw him, never thought of *himself* at all. His mind was rather raised than dejected, and his imagination distended with the pictured detail of all the treasures that had perished in the conflagration. At length he broke out in exclamation, which I have preserved as characteristic of his turn of mind.

"Yes, it has perished, that magnificent theatre, which for all the purposes of exhibition or comfort was the first in Europe. It is gone, with all its treasures of every description, and some which can never be replaced. The LIBRARY, which contained all those immortal productions of our countrymen, prepared for the purposes of representation! That vast collection of MUSIC, composed by the greatest geniuses in that science—by Handel, Arne, and others;—most of it manuscript in the original score! That WARDROBE, stored with the costumes of all ages and nations, accumulated by unwearied research, and at an incredible expense! SCENERY, the triumph of the art, unrivalled for its accuracy, and so exquisitely finished, that it might be the ornament of your drawing-rooms, were they only large enough to contain it! Of all this vast treasure nothing now remains, but the ARMS of ENGLAND over the entrance of the theatre—and the ROMAN EAGLE standing *solitary* in the market place!"

Soon after this Lord Mountjoy, I think, and other friends, called upon them, and among the topics of consolation, his Lordship turned his attention to the general sympathy that would certainly be excited by such a loss. Indeed, said he, the world in general are highly sensible of what you have done for the stage. It will be but *gratitude* in the people to compensate your loss. Mr. Kemble, with great ardour and quickness, turned himself round, and thus noticed the expression:

—"*Gratitude*, my Lord! the gratitude of the world and the people! My Lord, CHRIST was *crucified;* DE WIT was *assassinated:* so much for the world and the people!"

There could be no doubt about the instances he gave. The agitated and impetuous feeling of the moment will perhaps excuse ONE of the allusions—besides, that it was *essential* the Saviour should suffer for a world that, be it remembered, HE thought *worthy* of so great a sacrifice. And whatever may be said, and truly said, of the gratitude of the world and the people, Mr. Kemble soon had the unspeakable delight to find, that there were individuals who felt even the deepest interest in his merits and his misfortune.

Would I could be more particular in alluding to the munificent conduct of the FIRST PERSON in the realm!—the *delicacy* with which the aid was given, the princely charm which secured its reception! The terms which his Royal Highness had the condescension to use, written with his own hand, I could wish to be at liberty to make public; but I refrain, from the respect I bear to the illustrious giver, and my deference to the decision of my invaluable friend.

It was on this occasion, that his Grace the late Duke of Northumberland wrote to Mr. Kemble, and after expressing his concern for the accident that had befallen him, assured him that he had not forgotten his readiness in attending to a request which he had formerly made to him; and that if the use of such a sum as ten thousand pounds would be any convenience to him, it was entirely at his service upon his simple bond. Mr. Kemble expressed his sensibility for an offer so gracious; but he added that he felt a difficulty in accepting it, arising out of an apprehension, that, from the situation of his concerns with the theatre, he might not be so punctual in the payment of the interest upon the loan as it was imperious upon him to be. The Duke answered that he would take care *that* should be made perfectly easy to him, and that the steward should receive his express instructions to that effect. Thus encouraged Mr. Kemble, with suitable acknowledgments, accepted the loan, and signed a bond for its repayment, bearing simple interest, until the principal should be discharged.

The occasion on which Mr. Kemble was conceived by his great patron to have obliged him, was the giving a few lessons in elocution to Lord Percy, at his Grace's desire, intimated to him through his friend Dr. Raine of the Charterhouse. At first the doctor spoke of it, without *naming* the nobleman for whom he applied to him; and Mr. Kemble said, however flattered by the implied compliment, that, from a

want of sufficient leisure, he must respectfully decline the proposal. Dr. Raine said he regretted the refusal, as the Duke of Northumberland would be greatly disappointed: "Stop, doctor," said Mr. Kemble, "the Duke of NORTHUMBERLAND has a right to *command me*:" and then informing his friend of the kindness of the Duke to him, when he was in the York company, he readily conceded the object requested. He accordingly attended Lord Percy.

One day, when he was talking to me of his Grace's goodness to him, I asked him what aid he had been so happy as to render to the young nobleman? His answer was—"Lord Percy is a very accomplished speaker; he needed no assistance from me. However, in obedience to his Grace, we read occasionally together; but the aid I gave, if any was given, was to point to Lord Percy's attention something as to the presentment of the person, when addressing a numerous assembly; and I added some hints as to the management of the voice, so as at all times to be distinctly heard, and without exhaustion of the speaker. And in this part of my art I do flatter myself that I was competent to advise him."

Whoever remembers the neatness of Mr. Kemble's articulation, the small volume of his voice, and the address with which he lulled or stifled an almost habitual cough, will be of opinion, that he was an absolute master *indeed* of public delivery; and properly appreciated a very peculiar merit, that must have cost him infinite pains in its attainment.

CHAPTER VI.

The Covent Garden performers take refuge in the Hay Market. —The Exile.—Raising of the New Theatre.—Foundation laid by the Prince of Wales.—The Dinner.—Mr. Kemble. —The late Duke of Northumberland.—The destruction by fire also of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.—Proceedings of the parties concerned.

Among all the evils which attend upon our condition here, it is fortunate that, when once ascertained, the mind of man invariably turns itself to seek for consolation: nor is this relief confined to the expectation or the hope of good, but often springs from a conviction that what has really befallen us might have been even yet more severe.

Something like this, I know, did strike the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre, when the effect of their first shock a little subsided. The sum recovered on the policies of insurance was, I think, £44,500, itself no inconsiderable part of a fund by which to commence another building. Calamity, too, gives a claim upon the liberal, more promptly obeyed than the call of un suffering speculation. Mr. Harris knew one side of the theatre to be unsound, and he was confident that in a very few years the proprietors must have raised a new pile exclusively from their own funds.

What, therefore, ultimately remained, that admitted only the palliative of time, was the miserable loss of lives by the over hardihood at the great piazza door. The *commercial* character of the concern, to speak the language of business, was high. The proprietors of this theatre were men to be relied on. They could easily have raised twice the sum they *did*, and it would have been better for them to have done so.

Mr. Kemble turned himself to the task of preparation with great method and invincible application. The hospitable roof of the Opera-House was once again his shelter, and the sliding partitions being removed, the boxes were soon rendered even comfortable to the dramatic visitor. By the 26th of the same month, only six days after the conflagration, the Covent Garden company performed Douglas in the King's Theatre. After *God save the King*, which implies, in England, the salvation of every thing valuable, Mr. Kemble came forward to address the

people, who received him with almost rapturous applause. After apologising for any imperfection in his thanks, imputable to the full sense of all their favours to him, he proceeded to inform them that the proprietors had not even delayed the performance of their duty to the humble talents by which they were surrounded—they had supplied the pressing wants of the workmen in their employ, while they were busied in the arrangements to resume their place among the amusements of the town. He then laid before them the necessity for their indulgence in the exhibition of our native drama in the theatre of Italian Opera; but assured them daily progress would be made in bettering the provision *there*, while they immediately set about the erection of a new theatre, worthy of the Metropolis, and in which their hope was to be ready to receive the public by next September.

Even in their disaster they were too strong to fear competition. The other house had no prominent feature but Mrs. Jordan, and was overwhelmed with its embarrassments. To show, however, something as to the entire destitution of Covent Garden Theatre at this time, I one morning met Mr. Kemble, who said to me—"Show me where Mrs. Bland lodges, and come and help me to persuade her." We were close to the door; she was at home, and we went up to her. "My dear," said Mr. Kemble, "we are going to do *As You Like It*, and Ware (the leader) can manage pretty well as to the rest of the music, but he can't get the air you sing in the last act, 'Good Duke, receive thy Daughter'—one of Arne's, of which we *had* the score." So, she said, "Dear me, I have it not; beside, if I had, it would only be the voice part, and then what would you do for the orchestra?" "Why, if you will note the *song* down for us," said the manager, "Ware can put the harmony to it; if not Arne's, near enough to pass for the occasion." This the really kind creature said she would do with all her heart, and, after a few complimentary expressions, we took our leave.

They did, indeed, *daily* augment their provisions of scenery and decoration; for by the 7th of Oct. they brought forth a new melodrama, called The Forest of Hermanstadt, in which Liston was let loose upon *Parissot* and *Deshayes*, and stept forth at once the farcical *dieu de la danse*. Mrs. H. Johnston became even popular now, by the beauty of her attitudes and the loveliness of her expression. This was a compression of Skeffington's Mysterious Bride, by T. Dibdin, who produced a very interesting piece in two acts.

Reynolds in the mean time had read the enchanting romance of Madame Cottin, called Elizabeth, which he dramatised under the title of The Exile; and it was first acted with infinite splendour at the Opera-house, on the 10th of November. The effect of it was prodigious—it has been a fortune at every distinct re-

vival on our stage, and its procession was both graceful and elegant. The long peregrination of the daughter lost much of its pathos in the *shifting* of stage scenery—it is "as fleet as a glance of the mind." The remembrance of the romance was absolutely needed for the *interest* of the heroine. Here again Mrs. Johnston was fortunate in being cast into Alexine; and for state and majesty few empresses, even of the stage, could compete with the towering grandeur of Mrs. St. Leger.

Pope was now again with the Covent Garden manager; and to show the total want of management at the other house, they had allowed Kemble to possess himself of Young also; so that tragedy could really be acted no where else. He performed Daran with characteristic ardour, and the Exile, perhaps, has equalled the attraction even of Pizarro. But the combination of talent was extreme—Reynolds had persuasion equal to his tact, and secured the further aid of Mrs. Dickons and Incledon, and Munden, and Fawcett, and Liston. And this is no trifling art in the preparation of an author's triumph.

The grand incident, rushing into the sovereign's presence, reminded the critics of Mr. Colman and his Africans. How *enviable* was the lot of Madame Cottin on this occasion, who *really* invented the situation!

Mr. Robert Smirke, jun. was selected to be the architect of the new Theatre Royal; and the anticipation of classical structure was carefully kept awake by reports of his travels and his taste, and his peculiar study of theatres. The site of the new *play-house*, (if such a word still remain in our language,) was somewhat *extended*—a circumstance afterwards affecting a legal covenant;—some adjacent houses were bought, so as to open the area: the architect might have surrounded the house by a colonnade, and facilitated the departure of the spectators by stair cases of considerable width, and doors to be open only at the close of the amusement. He did not choose such a plan; but loaded his design with a bleak, a barren, and a portentous portico, and strengthened his walls, as though they were bound to resist every thing but the "crack of doom." So solid an edifice required funds to no mean amount even in the outset, and £50,000 in £500 shares, were subscribed in a very few days. They secured a *deposit* of 40 per cent., and the remainder was conveniently enough arranged; the whole, with £44,500 from the fire offices, was to be paid into the banking-house of Stephenson, Batson, and Co., there to be expressly and solely appropriated to the erection, and completion, and furnishing of the new theatre. The most costly materials were always chosen; the proprietors seemed never to recollect their *personal* responsibility for every thing—they were building a *temple* and

a *palace*, as if it had been voted by the people of England, and their representatives had constituted them the committee of taste for its erection.

The 30th of December was the day devoted to the ceremony of laying the first stone of the building. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales was present on the occasion; and deputations from the Masonic Lodges in town assembled at Freemasons' Tavern to meet their grand master. A merely *nominal* alliance may be better than none: whatever union might once have existed between the *symbol* and its *subject*, the *free* and the *real* MASON, I presume at the present day, unless the *architect* should condescend to be a *mason*, few members of the craft know a triglyph from a metope. I have never presumed to enter the Hall of Mystery in Queen Street, and therefore, as Gibbon observes of Virgil, in reference to the *Eleusinian* mysteries,* "Should it appear probable, that I had no opportunity of *learning* the SECERT, it will be something *more* than probable, that I shall not reveal what I never knew."

The whole of the proceedings were under the direction of Mr. Kemble, who paid every possible attention, as well to the accommodation of those who were admitted to see the formalities, as to the ceremony itself. The streets surrounding the theatre were lined by the Life Guards, and detachments of infantry were placed in situations to secure a facility of access to the doors of admission, and keep off the crowd. Covered platforms were raised within the interior of the building, for the accommodation of the spectators, and an open platform, from the grand entrance in Bow-street, to the north-east part of the building, where the stone was laid, was railed off, and the flooring covered with green cloth, bordered with crimson, directing the progress of the masonic brethren to the spot where the ceremony was to take place. At the north-east extremity of this platform, in a raised gallery, were placed the bands of the Life Guards, and of the Coldstream; and at the opposite side of the platform, the Duke of York's band was stationed, and played alternately the most admired martial pieces. A marquee was also erected, provided with refreshments; and a covered way built up for the masons to retire to in case of rain. The grenadier compa-

* On this subject even the wonderful reading of Gibbon, in his reply to Warburton, left his argument unsatisfactory. It was not necessary for Virgil to be *initiated* in the mysteries of Ceres to make them a subject of his poem. In the letters of Cicero to Atticus, he seconds the entreaties of his friend CHILIUS, the *poet*, to send to him an account of these very rites. They were, therefore, no doubt, ready for the *poetical* use of VIRGIL, without either the trouble of *initiation*, or sustaining personally the *anathema* of Horace. "Chilius te rogat, et ego ejus rogatu Ευμολπιδων πάτρια." CIC. Gronov. p. 858.

nies of the Foot Guards were stationed at the grand entrance door; flags were hoisted at the four corners of the building, and about forty Life Guards, who were masons, lined the space along which the procession was to pass. The company began to assemble as early as ten o'clock, and before twelve the seats were occupied with elegant females, the gentlemen standing on a raised platform behind them. The other parts of the stage erected for public accommodation, were also crowded, and the workmen employed upon the building were placed on scaffolds at a greater distance.

Mr. Harris and Mr. Kemble, the latter of whom was made a mason only on the preceding evening, both wearing the insignia of masons, received his Royal Highness as he alighted from his carriage, and conducted him to the marquee, where the grand officers were waiting his arrival, the band playing the Grenadier's March. The Prince was accompanied by the Duke of Sussex, the only branch of the royal family who was a mason except his Royal Highness, and Earl Moira, as deputy grand master Colonel Bloomfield, one of his Royal Highness's household, was also of the party, dressed in the old uniform.

The company all rose as his Royal Highness passed along the platform, the gentlemen remained uncovered, and the workmen gave three cheers, the band playing, "God save the King." A royal salute of twenty-one guns was then fired from carronades placed in the building, and the upper part of the stone was raised for the purpose of the ceremony.

After the Prince had passed a short time with the grand officers and others in the marquee, he came forward, uncovered, and prepared to lay the stone. The grand treasurer of the superior lodge deposited a bronze box, containing divers coins and medals of the King's reign, in the cavity of the foundation stone; and the cement being prepared, the Prince, as Grand Master, spread the same abroad with his silver trowel, and the stone, weighing upwards of three tons, was then let down, the bands continuing to play a martial air. The senior and junior wardens, and the deputy grand master, the Earl of Moira, having severally presented his Royal Highness with the plumb, the level, and the square, and the Prince having applied them to the fabric, and, pronouncing the work correct, he gave the stone *three* knocks with his mallet, and the ceremony of placing the stone was finished.

Three cups were then given to his Royal Highness containing corn, wine, and oil, which he scattered and poured upon the stone; then placing a plan of the building in the hands of Mr. Smirke, the architect, he desired him to complete the structure, according to that plan. His Royal Highness then turning to

Mr. Harris and Mr. Kemble, wished prosperity to the building, and the objects connected with it, and success and happiness to the proprietors and managers. The ceremony being finished, the band played Rule Britannia, and the Prince, the Duke of Sussex, and Earl Moira, were escorted back to the Prince's carriage, by the managers and grand officers, under a second salute of 21 guns.

The brothers of the masonic lodges then returned to their hall, in Queen Street, and the grand lodge was closed, after making a formal minute of the proceedings. Sir John Eamer and Mr. Alderman Newnham were among the grand officers. The Prince looked extremely well, and wore the insignia of Grand Master of the masons. The Duke of Sussex also appeared in good health and spirits, and walked side by side with his royal brother. The servants of the Prince wore their full dress liveries, and he was attended by the gentlemen of his household, in the same way as when he goes to court.

Among the articles deposited in the box, inclosed in the foundation, was a gold medal, stating, in Latin, that George, Prince of Wales, laid the foundation of the theatre with his own hand; and on the reverse is a bust of his Royal Highness, and the year 1808. Also another medal, of the same size, of copper, with the following inscription:

Under the auspices of
His most sacred Majesty, George III.
King of the United Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland,
The Foundation Stone of the Theatre, Covent Garden,
Was laid by his Royal Highness
George Prince of Wales,
M,DCCCVIII.

On the reverse is:

Robert Smirke, Architect.

Amidst the multitude who attended, it was impossible to distinguish individuals, though there were many persons of distinction present. Almost all the actors and actresses were there.

Mrs. Siddons looked extremely well, and wore a large plume of black feathers. She expressed a great deal of anxiety for her brother, Mr. Kemble, who, from having been confined to his chamber for above a month, came forward upon the occasion, accommodating his dress to the ceremony, and stood bareheaded under the rain.

Mr. Kemble was indefatigable in his exertions; he was full dressed in blue and white, with white silk stockings. Mr. Smirke, the architect, and Mr. Copeland, the builder, were also present.

The houses in the streets adjoining the theatre were crowded to the roof tops; and notwithstanding many thousands were collected on the outside, I did not hear of a single accident.

The proprietors and their friends on this great day dined together; and Mr. Kemble rose with the most grateful emotion to address them. He held in his hand a paper, which had been that moment delivered to him from His Grace the Duke of Northumberland. It noticed the business of the day as rendering it one of the proudest in Mr. Kemble's life, and conveyed his Grace's determination to make it one of the *happiest;* and as no doubt the joy of all concerned would demand and justify a bonfire on the occasion, he begged that Mr. Kemble would use the enclosed (his bond for 10,000*l. cancelled*) to *light* the *pile.*

In the accounts that have been given of this transaction, Mr. Kemble is made, with the utmost regularity, to pay the interest as the *quarters* became due; and the world may properly give my friend the credit of doing, to the *syllable*, every thing that ought to be done upon such an occasion. But as the writers themselves very accurately state, that the loan took effect soon after the burning of the theatre on the 20th of September, 1808, and the bond itself was returned cancelled on the 31st of December of the same year, it is certain that the noble Duke did not permit any vast exercise of Mr. Kemble's punctuality, as the *quarters* became due.

The act itself is one of those proud things in the history of a great family, which evince the mighty power of hereditary character and hereditary wealth. The nobleman, who thus distinguished Mr. Kemble, lived to receive the written expression of his sensibility and his gratitude. The *fame* of such beneficence is of vast importance to mankind; inasmuch as it *ensures*, from every DESCENDANT of the house of PERCY, the liberal *use* of that opulence, which is not merely a possession, but a trust—to be inherited only with honour, as it is dispensed with joy.

The cloud which had been cast over the theatrical world seemed at length to be breaking away; and although the full magnificence of Holland's design, as to Drury Lane Theatre, had been stinted by insufficient means, yet it was expected NOW, that its exterior would in some way be completed, so as to put it more upon a level with the classical pile, which Mr. Smirke was to erect on the site of the old theatre in Covent Garden. But it was THEN only to be on a level with its rival by a similar destruction.

It may hardly be worth the notice, but the fact is unquestionable, that there will be always, among the sour spirits of our

sectarists, many who look upon all elegant amusements as vanities, and upon theatres as the most pernicious of the tribe. To such persons the destruction of a play-house betokens the vengeance of an incensed Deity, and they point with very solemn triumph to the ruins of a profane and dissolute temple. The fate of Covent Garden, I remember, led them to some expressions, which seemed to *threaten* as well as prophesy—and it was currently said, that the *other* Belial would soon be grovelling in the dust. Every consideration, however, seemed to call upon the persons about Drury Lane Theatre for extreme vigilance and care. In the month of September, 1808, they had been assiduously employed on their roof, to guard their *own* Apollo from the fiery flakes that fell in showers from the burning theatre so nigh at hand. As details came to be known of the progress of this calamity, they learned that no *water* could be had for a long while to supply the engines, the main having *just at this time* been cut off for the purpose of laying down new pipes. Covent Garden, it was supposed, was destroyed from the wadding of a musket fired in Pizarro, which, being discharged upwards, had been driven deeply into some combustible substances, and there at length kindled into blaze the fuel which surrounded it.

What is the inference from all this? Why, that accident, if it occurred, would never surprise them *unprepared*. The utmost vigilance would be used that no *risk* should be run;—workmen would not be left entirely to *themselves*, whether sober or otherwise; and if on the stage a double care was taken to point the fire arms, or they blew off, with the customary stench, a little harmless powder only, to startle the gentler part of their spectators, they would not *therefore* think themselves at liberty to abandon spacious apartments of the house communicating with the boxes to the liquid flames of *varnish*, which either carelessness might leave to their natural effect, or malice secretly direct to the destruction of the building. But if even this were so, and the ample sweep of the audience portion of the building *took fire*, some persons should have been in the way, to be apprized either by *smoke*, or *noise*, or *light*, of what was at work around them. The *iron curtain* should have been ready, to secure *one* half of the pile from the flames; and the *reservoir* on the roof at least *not empty*, and ready to pour its streams of water upon the burning circles of the other half.

I do not therefore wonder that, with no more interval for carelessness to grow to its height than five short months, there should be found HUNDREDS of calm and observing persons, who utterly refused to credit the alleged cause of the fire when it happened, and persisted in the opinion, that Drury Lane Theatre

perished by *design*, and design with *perfect science* to aid it. "If," says a cotemporary writer, "it had been a night of performance, and the flames had spread with the same rapidity, many hundreds must have perished." The flames *could not* have spread with the same rapidity; for an *excessive* fire could not have been made in the coffee-room by *workmen*. The usual *tea makers* would have been there; and no more fire in the stove than sufficed to boil the water. But he goes on: "If it can be believed that this was the work of some basely interested or malicious incendiary, the time chosen (a Friday in Lent) appears to show a feeling of *conscience* even in such a villain; if not, we have only a further though needless confirmation, that, as in the *fall of a sparrow*, so in the most awful scenes of waste, 'there is a Providence.'"

This is a dark and inscrutable subject. The short-sighted *humanity* or *justice*, given to us for guides, might humbly suggest, that, if special intervention were deigned in such a case, PROPERTY might have been saved as well as LIVES, by a sudden effect either upon the *mind* or *hand* of the incendiary, and all the long train of evils averted, which fell so heavily upon the dependents on the theatre. But let us look to the event.

The Circassian Bride, and the Unconscious Counterfeit, were advertised for the performances of Saturday the 25th. It being Lent, no performance took place on the 24th. After a strict investigation, it was generally believed, that this melancholy catastrophe was occasioned by accident. It appeared that the stove in the upper coffee-room was of slight construction, for the mere purpose of accommodating the customers of the evening with water for tea, &c., and quite surrounded with *woodwork.** In this stove the workmen, who had been employed during the day, had made a much larger fire† than it was customary to make there, the remains of which were left in it at four o'clock, and it was reasonable to suppose, had communicated to the surrounding woodwork, and that the fire had been gaining strength‡ from that time to the moment of its bursting forth.

In less than a quarter of an hour from that time, the fire spread in one unbroken flame over the whole of the immense pile, extending from Brydges-street to Drury Lane; so that the pillar of

* A fire-place, in a *theatre* too, surrounded with *woodwork!*

† "A much *larger* fire!" Who states this? If the *workmen*, why leave it *in* at four o'clock, since it was no longer needed?—If the *servants* of the house, who remarked it as extraordinary, why did not they *watch* it or *extinguish* it?

‡ *From that time to the*, &c.—That is, from *four* o'clock to *eleven* at night, *seven hours*; during which the fire was left to *go out* or *destroy*, and no one creature in the building was near the room, to know how these workmen had *left* the combustible articles they were using, and *known* to be using!

fire was not less than 450 feet in breadth. In a very few minutes all that part of the theatre, together with the front row of boxes, was on fire, and the rapidity of the flames was such, that before twelve o'clock the whole of the interior was one blaze. The theatre was at this time left to its fate and the appearance was tremendously grand. Never before did I behold so immense a body of flame; and the occasional explosions that took place, were awful beyond description. The interior was completely destroyed by one o'clock. Some of the houses partially caught fire in Russel-street, but the engines, with a plentiful supply of water, continued to play on those contiguous to the theatre. The advantage of having a great public structure of this kind in an insulated situation, was apparent upon this awful and melancholy occasion. Although the engines could not arrest the progress of the flames in the theatre, they were able to play upon the surrounding buildings, and thus saved the neighbourhood from destruction. Neither the burning of Covent Garden The atre, nor the late fire at St. James's Palace, could be compared in terrific grandeur with this conflagration. The Thames appeared like a sheet of fire.

At three o'clock the flames had nearly subsided; that once magnificent structure presented to the view nothing but an immense heap of ruins; and at five o'clock the flames were completely subdued.

Of the immense property of all sorts, in scenery, machinery, dresses, decorations, music, instruments, plays, &c. of which nothing was saved, no estimate can be formed. It was insured for the exact following sums:

Imperial - - -	13,500*l.*
Hope - - - -	10,000
Eagle - - - -	6,500
British - - - -	5,000
	35,000*l.*

The whole of this insurance has been *attached* in the different offices by His Grace the Duke of Bedford, the ground landlord, &c. The treasury having a party wall, was unhurt, and but for the injudicious zeal of some of the assistants, in opposition to the better judgment of Mr. Peake, none of the books or papers would have been lost—*that* loss, however, was not of very great moment, since *all the accounts are now closed.* The whole of the property of Mrs. Jordan, and some belonging to Messrs. Matthews and Decamp, were the only things saved. All the splendid furniture that formerly ornamented the dwelling of Mr. Sheridan, when Treasurer of the Navy, (the fruits of office,) were destroyed. Mr. Phillips, who resides in Cross-court,

Russel-court, gave the first alarm at the stage door. Not a single life was lost.

The plan of the late theatre included an area of upwards of 320 feet in length, by 155 in breadth, and the height of the building, measuring from the substratum to the roof, was 118 feet. On the 5th of March, 1794, Mr. Fox brought up a petition in the House of Commons from Mr. Sheridan, in behalf of himself and the other proprietors, praying certain powers to clear the avenues of the theatre for the accommodation of the public. The petition was referred to a committee, and the intended improvements were incomplete when the edifice sunk in flames.* The front in Brydges-street was to have been ornamented by buildings, containing a coffee-house, tavern, library, shops of various sorts, and residences for the performers. According to the plan, it would have been one of the most complete theatres in Europe, and worthy the British capital; but it fell before it reached perfection. The ornaments of the house had a rich effect, and at the same time a simplicity which gratified the eye, without reducing the effect of the stage decorations. The drop scene was considered by artists a rare production of architectural design. The building of this theatre cost 129,000*l.* The debts upon it amounted to 300,000*l.* The situation of all concerned was dreadful in the extreme. Mr. Sheridan experienced on this calamitous occasion the sympathy of the House of Commons, but he must have called up no vulgar philosophy to sustain him. Men carry their veneration for genius a great way; but for such a person as Mr. Sheridan to struggle with the *old* debt, incur a *new* one, and *rebuild* his theatre, was utterly impossible. His habits had rendered confidence, at least, no *commercial* failing.

The performers in the mean time, no longer "rejoicing in their matchless chief," met to consider what was to be done for *themselves*. Here were some hundreds of ingenious persons fitted for their work, with their *factory* in ruins, and there employers reduced to beggary. Thus matters stood till the 1st of March, when Mr. Sheridan *resigned all control over the ladies and gentlemen of the late establishment, and with his good wishes left them to their fortune.* Perhaps "the tears resided in an onion," that on the part of performers "watered this sorrow." They were not suffered long to indulge the feeling,

* On the night of the conflagration, I stood, with my boots covered by the water, in the middle of the street, until I saw the *figure* on the summit of the house sink into the flames; *that* APOLLO which a contemptible *vanity* had thrust up into the place, that, in England, should always be occupied by SHAKSPEARE:—to whose honour, moreover, be it remembered, the pile, on its erection, *professed* itself to be consecrated.

whatever it was; for THREE HOURS after this, he sent them word, that "*he would remain with them*, and *that they must provide for him and his son Tom.*"

They utterly refused to receive him, and settled upon endeavouring to procure a license from the Lord Chamberlain for *themselves*. This was a great deal too *loose* a scheme; the performers could hardly have *considered* its unavoidable results. Condemning their former governor to exist upon his *wits*, might not strike them as imposing upon HIM any calamity without due preparation—he had done this all his life. But that the PROPRIETORS of the theatre—the RENTERS—the CREDITORS, should for 300,000*l.* absolutely lost, solicit no attention from the government; that they should assemble amid their *own* ruins, and, in tender recollection, contentedly carry away each of them a brick as a specimen and a relic—was too much to expect from any set of people who looked to their own interest. Accordingly, when the Actors waited upon the Lord Chamberlain, even so early as at *ten* o'clock in the morning, they found Mr Sheridan had been there *before* them, and they had something to endure very like reproach, that they could think of such a violent and selfish usurpation of the rights of others. But let me do them justice; they did not mean to slip by a LICENSE into the possession of the PATENT, and snatch from the great sufferers all hope of future benefit; they wanted THEN, at that moment of extreme and miserable need, to give bread to the retainers of the establishment under *three pounds* per week; and if they should be allowed to act at the Lyceum, the receipts of which could be but moderate, they then had resolved constantly to pay in *full all* such salaries, and suffer a deduction to be made from those of the higher performers, who could struggle better for themselves, and were *contented to do so.*

There was something in this that struck the Lord Chamberlain; the urgency, too, was extreme, and he granted the performers his license to act *three nights*, for their own *particular* benefit, at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. Mr. Taylor, it was understood, *gave* them his shelter—I believe he charged them only the actual expenses incurred—for they had his *corps de ballet*, as well as his house, and they ventured to infringe a little upon play-house prices. On these nights the public with cheerfulness gave 7*s.* in the boxes, 5*s.* in the pit, and 2*s.* 6*d.* in the gallery. On these three nights upwards of 2,200*l.* was taken at the doors. They did not suffer this timely aid to shrink away by *peculation*—they knew well the mysteries of door-keepers and check takers; persons somehow beyond *all* check, and the "heart of whose mystery" seems, like the soul of the "brethren three" in Spenser, to be regularly transferred

at *departure*. They therefore, in succession, received the money and checked themselves; and were enabled, literally, to give *bread* to the starving. They obtained, at the same theatre, three nights more from Mr. Taylor's liberality; but on the 11th of April, they opened at the Lyceum, and continued, by permission of the Lord Chamberlain, to act there to the 10th of June. The six nights at the Opera-house had the distinction given by the talents of Mrs. Siddons, on the 3d of April, in Lady Randolph, and on the 10th by those of Madame Catalani, in *Semiramide*. On the latter occasion, there was an overflow that swept away all bars and bolts, and checks and their receivers. The *charity* of the public, to hear Madame Catalani, on this occasion, is said, in very numerous instances, to have forgotten the usual *donation* at the door.

It only remains for me to state that, upon some remarkable depreciation in the 500*l.* shares of this theatre *after the fire*, the unfortunate holders being contented to *take* whatever they could get—a public advertisement, from the PROPRIETORS, recommended them to be *cool;* and to be assured, that every *endeavour* towards a just and equitable arrangement with them would *precede* any attempt towards rebuilding the theatre. Some of them, I believe, became *quite* cold before that astonishing event.

CHAPTER VII.

Building of the New Theatre.—Its exterior.—Remarks.—Interior.—Threatened storm as to new prices.—The O. P. riot.—The dinner.—The stage.—Termination of the contest.

From the destruction of the one theatre the mind recovers something of its elasticity in contemplating the rapid erection of the other. The excavations for the foundation began about the end of November. The last day of the year witnessed the ceremony of laying the foundation stone, and the whole building was finished on the 18th of September, 1809.

To accomplish this rapid task with the security that was equally essential in the work, horse-mills were erected to grind the lime and prepare the mortar—*that*, too, was used immediately in a hot state, to prevent any interruption from frost, and courses of Yorkshire stone, at every interval of four feet in height, were worked into the walls, to render them sufficiently strong.

The whole of the roof, by the dexterous employment of machinery, was raised and fixed in one month; it was nearly 100 feet in length, and 130 feet in width; every principal pair of rafters sustained, by calculation, a weight of 30 tons.

The outside of the theatre rests upon an area of about 220 feet in length, and 170 in breadth. The only insulation that merits the name is on the eastern side, Bow-street, and the western of Prince's Place. A fire in Hart-street, with a north wind to assist it, must do great injury to the theatre, even if they were speedily supplied with water. The Bedford avenue is gloomy, and would be ineffectual as to danger from the south.

There is, externally, not a particle of taste—a heavy portico of four doric columns, the largest in any modern building, astonishes by its ponderous inutility; the columns are 5 feet 6 inches in diameter. The doric, it should be observed, was the earliest of the three orders properly Grecian—the enormous thickness of the column diminished with the refinement of art, and the accomplished Corinthian consummated the invention of the Greeks.

We are told that the Bow-street front is an imitation of the Temple of Minerva in the Acropolis. Partially it may be: but it has no interior columns—no point of sight from which it can be viewed, or its proportions discerned. The lower part of the building is of stone, the upper of cement very dingy, and liable to scale off or crack. Referring to the archetype, the ornaments on the tympanum and frieze are omitted. so are those on the corners of the pediment.

Men are so liable to be carried away by a catch-word;—mention *freedom*, and they seem to think all *curb* unnecessary. Talk of the *classic*, and they do not think of *utility*, and never ask even whether *theatres*, among the ancients, bore the external form of *temples*. Here every thing was consequently to be *classical*. The greater part of the *bas reliefs* in front are quite unintelligible, except to the artist and the antiquary—Minerva, the Muses, Apollo, Bacchus, the Eumenides—Eschylus, Sophocles, Euripides. Even the modern drama has too much classic tendency—for Milton is our *epic*, not dramatic, wonder, and Comus and Agonistes belong to the Grecian drama.

It is true we have Shakspeare in the employment of his preternatural power; he calls forth the inhabitants of his enchanted Isle; but would himself probably wonder that the triformed Hecate, in her car drawn by oxen, followed by Lady Macbeth with the daggers, and her husband turning away from the murdered Duncan, should be the *sole* evidences of the English genius for the STAGE; and he might now venture to inquire whether all his *comedies* had perished; and if they had, whether nothing of BEN JONSON, or FLETCHER, or MASSINGER survived, to fill so great a chasm? One might suppose him to imagine, that even the *successors* of our greatest dramatists merited some place among the *reliefs* of an English theatre; and that DRYDEN, and CONGREVE, and FARQUHAR and VANBRUGH, as they could fill the *interior* occasionally, merited some little attention on the *outside* of an English play-house.

As to the two Muses of the drama, MELPOMENE, though not discriminated as to attitude from the common figure of Melancholy, he would, perhaps, think sufficiently *attributed:* the other figure, with the shepherd's crook, or *pedum*, on her right shoulder, he might refer to his classical friend BEN; and upon being assured by him, that all was *correct* with a gracious *smile* of deference, contentedly receive it for COMEDY.

The halls and stair-cases of this theatre, its lobbies and saloons, are really wretched, when compared with the con-

trivances of Wyatt at Drury Lane; and to allow such a clownish exhibition as the long unmeaning figure, *called* Shakspeare, to remain where it stands a single night, proves nothing, but that the managers of the house must pass always by it as *rapidly* as the people do.

In speaking of it as a playhouse, its highest excellence was the stage itself, constructed by Mr. Saul; certainly the most perfect with which I am acquainted. In the audience part of the building some positive improvements claim to be stated.

The boxes were calculated to hold as many people as they did in the former theatre; only, from the encroachment of the private circle, now occupying the whole of the third tier, 140 persons were accommodated in the lower circles. Six feet six inches were now the average depth of the three rows, which had been only six feet three inches in the old theatre, and but six feet in Drury Lane.

The pit had still its former *twenty* seats, but the declivity, instead of being, as formerly, only three feet, was now four feet nine inches.

In the two-shilling gallery of Drury Lane, a person seated in the back row was one hundred feet from the stage door; in the old Covent Garden he was eighty-eight feet, and in the present only eighty-six. In the upper gallery these relative distances were one hundred and four feet, ninety-three feet, and eighty-five feet.

The house *was* lighted by glass chandeliers in front of each circle—270 wax-candles was the nightly supply: 300 patent lamps lighted the stage and its scenery. The prevailing colour of the house was white; the ornament, gold upon a light pink ground; the box doors were all of solid mahogany.

The first and second circles of the boxes were appropriated to the public. From the third circle they were entirely excluded—the boxes here were let annually, and each of them had a small anti-room about six feet wide, opening outwards into a general saloon, appropriated to these renters, as that below was to the public. To these boxes the entrances were private.

In a commercial concern, like the building of a new theatre, men who bring forward a large capital, or what is the same thing, burthen themselves with a long and heavy debt, may be excused for any sanguine hope of reimbursement arising out of an invidious and dangerous distinction. The annual property in boxes at the Opera, is tolerated for the comfort of those who alone are competent to such an enjoyment: but even there no separation exists from the public at

large—whoever pays at the pit-door, may then range at will among the circles of our nobility, whose boxes only contain the requisite number of chairs, without anti-rooms, which fancy can fill with profligacy unseen, and without what was *really* an objection, (for the immorality was a pretence,) the absolute seclusion of a PRIVILEGED ORDER from all *vulgar contact*.

The *necessity* of the actors, who had been burnt out of the rival theatre, had led them to ask *7s.* for their boxes in the Opera-house for six representations—it was given by the public cheerfully and graciously. A critical friend of mine expressed a hope, "that this would not be drawn into a *precedent*." The proprietors of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, demonstrated that they could only be reimbursed for their enormous outlay, by a rise in the prices, which would place the boxes at seven shillings, the pit at four, leaving the still far distant galleries at the old rates of two shillings and one.

Enough had transpired of their intentions to excite a vast deal of displeasure among our young men, who commonly use the theatres as their evening relaxation. My professional habits at this time led me to be almost daily in the public offices; where, as a man of business, who had once written for the stage, and whose intimacy with Mr. Kemble was well known, many very respectable persons in those offices would frequently exceed the usual official intercourse, and ask my opinions relative to the theatre and its concerns.

I found that a great proportion of their body was decidedly opposed to the new scheme; and I saw a prospect of annoyance, such as made me tremble for my friends. I told Mr. Kemble what I knew; but he smiled at my terrors—and so late as two o'clock on the day of opening, I saw him in Bow-street, quite perpendicular and confident, with a heap of papers under his arm, which he was himself going to deliver at the offices of our journals; the *feelings* of which, as might be imagined, referred to *politics* rather than to plays—the tory newspapers advocating the *new prices*, and the whig or radical invariably the *old*.

On the 18th of September, the new theatre, which had been completely finished within nine months, opened with Macbeth, the most attractive tragedy of Shakspeare, and the musical farce of The Quaker.

A slight advance in the price of admission had been announced in the play-bills, and adequately justified by the proprietors. To obviate a clamour, which assigned the engagement of Madame Catalani as the cause of this advance,

it was distinctly affirmed, that, had that lady been unknown to the public, the proprietors would have felt themselves compelled to solicit their indulgence as to the rate of admission.

The theatre was soon filled, and the audience took their seats without any striking demonstration of the hostile intentions among them. The orchestra commenced with the national anthem, and God save the King was sung by the whole vocal strength of the theatre. It was attended by the usual tokens of respect from the audience.

Mr. Kemble then made his appearance with the intention of speaking a poetical *address*, upon opening the new theatre. As he was, almost immediately after, to reenter as Macbeth, he appeared in the dress of that character. The sight of him was the *assigned* moment for displaying hostility; and he was saluted by a yell of clamour and execration, which did not allow one line of his *address* to be heard in the body of the house. It spoke, however, of the origin and progress of the drama, and when it arrived at its brightest period, it took credit for the improvements of scenic representation in the following couplet—

> "Thus Shakspeare's fire burns brighter than of yore;
> And may the stage that boasts him *burn no more.*"

It ended with no very poetical allusion to the *solidity* of the building, and the *burthen* of its cost; and expressed a hope that the ardour to raise a nation's *taste*, would be repaid by its *liberality*.

The tumult was kept up, whatever performers were upon the stage; but the faction distinguished itself by a peculiar clamour on the appearance of any member of Mr. Kemble's family. They demonstrated their taste, as well as contempt, by standing with their backs turned to the stage, and keeping their hats on during the whole of the performance.

On the termination of these entertainments, two gentlemen appeared upon the stage, who were supposed to be magistrates from the Bow-street office. One of them attempted to speak, but, not being able to obtain the slightest attention, took a paper from his pocket, which was presumed to be the Riot Act. The hisses with which they were saluted induced them, after a short time, to withdraw—but several riotous persons were, by the police, taken into custody, and held to bail for their appearance at the ensuing sessions.

I have neither space nor inclination to follow a systematic conspiracy through a continued annoyance of SIXTY-SIX nights. It must have been attended with no inconsiderable

expense to its perpetrators; for, besides the price paid on their admission, many thousand hand-bills and placards were printed, in every variety of type; and even banners painted, sometimes ingenious enough in their designs, but always personal, malignant, or indecent in their inscriptions. Occasional irruptions were made by Townshend and his assistants into the pit—the fortified camp of the assailants; and sometimes, after desperate conflicts, the officers bore away in triumph the standards of the enemy.

Mr. Kemble was a man of very uncommon self-possession, great temper, and power of nerve; but there, and every where, if his opponents were not to be satisfied by *reason*, he was contented to want all other means of carrying his purpose.

When he could make himself heard, during any partial cessation of the clamour, he endeavoured to impress them with certain most unquestionable truths: he told them that, in the reign of Queen Anne, one hundred years ago, the admission to the pit had been *three shillings;* and left to their justice the inference that would naturally arise from the consideration, that every article of their consumption had even prodigiously increased in price. With his characteristic and manly simplicity, he assured them, that the proprietors, for the last ten years, had not received six per cent. for their money;—money, too, ventured in a property so fluctuating and precarious:—and this, he added, "I declare to you, upon my honour, I, who would not tell a LIE for all that this theatre is worth."

The objects of sympathy are naturally various in a mixed assembly. One sagacious person had stated, that he should not demur, for his own part, to the new arrangements, provided the actors were to benefit by the receipts. It was an easy matter for Mr. Kemble to show, that the performers of the stage now enjoyed three times the emoluments of their greatest predecessors. On a subsequent occasion he told them, that the proprietors by no means wished to be judges in their own cause;—that they therefore proposed to submit their books to the inspection of a committee, whom it was impossible for them to influence; to consist of the Governor of the Bank of England, His Majesty's Attorney and Solicitor General, with the most respectable of our merchants—Mr. Baring, Mr. Angerstein, and others. That such committee, after due investigation, would make a specific report upon the actual state of facts; and this, as it was a criterion from which the proprietors by no means shrunk, so he trusted that it would terminate all disputes upon the subject, and prove a

full and perfect satisfaction to the public. He added that, "until this document could be prepared and laid before them, the theatre must necessarily continue shut." Indeed this measure was, on every principle, absolutely essential; for even the government could not be indifferent to the nightly resistance of its police, and the defiance of its magistracy;—to the means afforded of disciplining a mob for *popular purposes*, in declared violation of the law, as it was laid down in the case of Macklin by Lord Mansfield himself. That profound and admirable judge having declared "that any persons who went to the theatre, night after night, for the purpose of preventing an actor from exercising his profession, or to injure managers or proprietors, would not only be subject to an action at law, but might be indicted for the offence: and further, that if the parties *concur*, although not previously acquainted with each other, it is a CONSPIRACY."

It must be obvious that nothing admitted of easier proof than the *injury* sustained on this occasion; inasmuch as the brutal, the ferocious, and the infamously *indecent* conduct of these rioters, rendered it impossible for its usual frequenters to enter the theatre at all; or, if they did, to receive, what they had a right to expect, the gratification of the drama. That future times may have no doubt as to the indecency to which I have alluded, they may here be told, that the appearance of any LADY in the circle of private boxes became a signal for every unmanly description of insult;—for language, which never, I believe, polluted the lips of any *other* monsters, except those in a neighbouring nation, who assailed with untranslatable filth the unhappy person of Antoinette, and the elegant females of her court.

Those who take a cynical pleasure in surveying human nature in its lowest state of degradation, (I say lowest state, because it was *voluntary*,) may amuse themselves by contemplating the efficient O. P. rioter, dressing for exhibition in the theatre. He had to pass, though unsearched, at the doors, and to squeeze himself through an iron or wooden hatch, of our usual width, encumbered as he might be with his watchman's rattle, or dustman's bell, or post-boy's horn, or French-horn, or trombone, with a white night-cap in his pocket—his placards of a dozen feet in length wound about his body, and his bludgeon for close action with the enemy. He had to practise his O. P. dance, and rave himself as hoarse as a night coachman in winter—he, at the hazard of his limbs, had to make the central *rush* from the back of the pit down to the orchestra, which trembled at every nerve of catgut it contained. And, in addition to all this, he became skilled in the

most seemingly desperate sham-fights, ending with roars of laughter, or real combats, to maintain his position in the field.

Among the remarkable circumstances of this riot, a reader of the present day may find the persecution of Mr. Kemble and his family the most unlooked-for occurrence. A party of the champions was ordered to visit his house in Russel-street, after the usual close at the theatre of an evening—to remain there only a certain time, and then disperse. This was humanely aimed at the nerves of Mrs. Kemble and her female domestics. The magistrates came there, and gave the necessary orders in case the building should be forced, or an attempt made to set it on fire. There was a party of the military close at hand.

The truth of this matter is, that the thoughtless play-goer soon became a mere tool in the hands of the politician—nor did the secret fairly escape until the O. P. dinner, when some visitors at the table, holding office under the crown, to their amazement and disgust heard, that the committee in the next room, who were framing their resolutions, consisted (*very properly*) of the same gentlemen who had managed the *funds* of the Westminster election. Now Mr. Harris, the father, and his son, between them, held seven-twelfths of the property of the theatre, and Mr. Kemble but *two;* it naturally followed that, as to the measures taken, the latter was more likely to give effect to the decisions of the superior interest, than determine all by his own *avarice* or *vanity*, or any other of his infinite bad qualities! But it was publicly announced, that the old gentleman, though destroyed in his health by exposure to the rain on the day of the foundation, was come to town, ill as he was, and with his characteristic bravery, "he would risk the last shilling of his property rather than submit." Theatrically speaking, therefore, there was no reason for the flattering preference given in this business to Mr. Kemble. If Mendoza and other *boxers* were introduced into the theatre, *he* was the very last man about the concern to suggest such interference, or to think of either public or private resistance of the *kind* implied by such agents.

There is a fluttering tribe of songsters about the town, who are afraid of being *dull*, that are never *rational*, and from such persons, not malicious, but simply *wanton*, the O. P.'s derived verses, sometimes above their comprehension, and always better than they deserved. Mr. Kemble was invariably the hero of these levities. Stunned by the noise, irritated by the vulgar abuse of this mob, personally ill, and

under the influence of his constant resort, opium, he one night, using the very idle formulary of genteel periods, said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I wait to know what it is you want." This variation for the better term, "your pleasure," was laid hold of with great vehemence. Usually sufficiently guarded, this phrase had escaped from his infirmity; but his *system* as to the public was address of *profound respect*. Indeed he could not but feel, that the actor should do this for his own sake; or otherwise what is his condition? To be any way the *servant* of the PUBLIC, may gratify even a lofty nature: this term *alone*, kept steadily in view, *liberalizes* the profession; for he whose talent is prostituted for the amusement of a RABBLE, must, as a man of either sense or feeling, shrink in disgust from the meanness of his occupation.

Mr. Kemble ardently loved his profession—he thought that the theatre, more than any other public place, was bound to speak with extreme propriety the language of the country. He consequently, upon principle, took infinite pains in his own pronunciation. Walker, who had written ably on the subject, used to visit him, and I think he commonly agreed with that orthoëpist. He had not forgotten Garrick's epigram as to the old vice of pronunciation, and constantly, therefore, took care "that *I* should never be mistaken for *U*." Finding at least a *hundred proofs*, without much trouble, that the plural *aches* was written formerly in our verse as a word of two syllables, and consequently so spoken—when he acted Prospero he threatened Caliban, with the word and the utterance of his countrymen, from Shakspeare to Swift. The blockheads, who would have been safe before Cade's committee as knowing nothing "of a *noun* or a *verb*," had a banner with Mr. Kemble's figure painted, and the motto—

"Be quiet—Mr. Kemble's head *aitches!*"

The hatred of Kemble was as much *political*, as any other part of the business. I remember the person of the *honest* lawyer, as they called him—(I suppose because he had *no* practice.) He wore the uniform of the whigs. Now it should be remembered, that Mr. Kemble had quitted the theatre of the Coryphœus of that party; that the adherents to Mr. Sheridan bore him no good will for his desertion to the other standard; that the building of Covent Garden Theatre, upon the *personal* credit of its proprietors, seemed almost to strew with *salt* the desperate ruins of the other house. Perhaps, therefore, it was without any great pain, that some persons saw the cup of triumph fly from the expectant lips of their rivals—

"As once it fled the lip of TANTALUS."

What though the *field* was won, ALL was not won—there were still grounds of dissension, which could be done away only by long contest or submission; either of which lowered the crest of their once *secure*, but now harassed and apprehensive competitors. If the managers of Covent Garden should ultimately *succeed*, a victory would be gained, which, by showing greater GAINS in future, might lead the speculative to replace their own Apollo. If they *foiled*, it showed the folly of struggling any longer for the rival erection; and time and despair would dispose of its enormous debts with the lost books of LIVY, or any other irrecoverable treasures of antiquity.

There was an expression very like enjoyment upon the faces of many persons who had been connected with the other house. Perhaps we never altogether grieve at the calamity of a rival. Certainly the attachment to Mr. Kemble in such people never drew them into any altercation with his persecutors. If they spoke at all upon the subject, they spoke the same language.

But to return to the course of this narrative. I cannot imagine such egregious folly in the proprietors of Covent Garden, as to suppose that any declaration, however respectable, made upon inspection of their books, would satisfy the sort of persons who assailed them. However it might be proper to publish such a statement, to keep firmly on their side the leading authorities, and the persons of fortune and consideration in town—that the *first* might be assured an alarming riot was not resisted for an object whose necessity was not cogent, and the *other* classes convinced that they were not *taxed* in their amusement without the true commercial ground for it—"that in no other way could the patentees obtain a suitable interest on their capital." The committee consisted of—Sir Charles Price, Bart. M. P.; Sir Thomas Plumer, Knt. his Majesty's Solicitor General; John Sylvester, Esq. Recorder of the city of London; John Whitmore, Esq. Governor of the Bank of England; and John Julius Angerstein, Esq.

On the 3d of October, those gentlemen, fully satisfied of the facts, after a most minute investigation of the books of the concern, authorized the publication of the result, which was in substance *this*:—

"The rate of profits actually received, upon an average of the last *six* years, is a sum of $6\frac{4}{5}$ per cent. on the CAPITAL

embarked. If the WHOLE of the property had been ensured, it would have been little more than 5 per cent.

"The future profits of the theatre, at the proposed *advance* in the prices of admission—if the whole capital expended in the new building were to be ensured, could be only 3½ per cent.—and if driven back upon the *former prices*, under their present burthens, the proprietors would annually sustain A LOSS of ¾ per cent. upon the amount of capital!"

The average profit of the last SIX years, alluded to above, was only the inconsiderable sum of 8345*l.* 6*s.* 2*d.* or 6¾ per cent. upon a capital of rather more than 130,900*l.* at which calculation of capital, be it remembered, Mr. Kemble himself purchased his SIXTH share in the theatre. As to the perfect *competence* of the parties to the investigation, there could be no more doubt, than as to their high honour and integrity. The public never knew any thing before, as to this hazardous description of property.

A few arithmetical illustrations may yet be of use, drawn, in fact, from the statement so authentically made. They will show a theatre, of all commercial speculations to be the most desperate. The receipts of the six years, taken together, amounted to 365,983*l.* 17*s.* 1*d.*, of which the highest year (the boy Betty's first) is 70,727*l.* 9*s.* 10*d.*; the lowest (1808-9.) only 46,343*l.* 18*s.* But the average of the whole six is 60,997*l.* 6*s.* 2*d.*; this sum divided by 200, the number of acting nights, gives 300*l.* per night, a prodigious receipt for six years together. But let us look at their payments.—In the six years they had absolutely paid expenses of theatre *only* - - - - - - £307,912

And left unpaid debt for which they were responsible - - - - - - 8,000

The outlay to bring the receipts was - £315,912

Here was a concern, therefore, actually disbursing per year 52,652*l.*, or 263*l.* per night, so that the whole gain upon the concern to the proprietors was reduced to 37*l.* per night—ALL that an immense capital brought them, standing, moreover, themselves a risk from fire of nearly 100,000*l.* and liable to all the caprices of taste, and the perils of weather and of great public calamities. Again, I repeat, there is a fascination about theatres, and those who adorn them, irresistible by prudence, defying all calculation—tempting to take up, splendid in possession, impossible to relinquish—in which hope and disappointment eternally succeed each other, and carry the victims usually through life, by the possibility of acquiring temporary aid—leaving at last a questionable pos-

session, loaded with debt, to be the *theme* for endless dispute, and the *profit* only of the salaried performer and the lawyer.

The statement produced no alteration in the conduct of the rioters. On the 4th of October, at his first appearance before them, Mr. Kemble was driven off the stage unheard; and Mrs. C. Kemble, in Gay's Lucy, was pelted with bitten apples, which she stooped to take up, evidently in a pregnant state, and then threw them gently off the stage at the side scenes. In the course of the evening Mr. Kemble again came forward, and with a suitable compliment to the gentlemen, who had, not *pro forma*, but most elaborately, gone into so complex an investigation and statement, hoped that the fullest satisfaction would result from the publication, and that liberal justice would be done to the proprietors.

It may be as well here to observe, that the patentees acted as to the *new prices* in strict pursuance of the power vested in them by their patent; and I shall here quote the very terms by which the right is conceded.

"And that it shall and may be lawful, to and for the said Sir William D'Avenant, his heirs and assigns, to take and receive of such of our subjects, as shall resort to see or hear any such plays, scenes and entertainments whatsoever, such sum or sums of money, as either have accustomably been given, and taken, in the like kind, or as *shall be thought reasonable* by HIM or THEM, in regard of the *great expenses* of *scenes*, *music*, and such *new decorations*, as have not been formerly used."—15th Jan. 44th Charles II., 1662.

Thus both the necessity and the right on the part of the proprietors are clearly established.

Bills were found by the grand jury against a considerable number of the rioters, but nothing could be done against them this year. A rather strong measure, on the 31st of October, by James Brandon, gave into the custody of Samuel Taunton, a constable, the redoubted person of Henry Clifford, the *honest* barrister; and him the said chief and leader of the O. P.'s did violently take before James Read, Esq., the sitting magistrate at Bow-street. For which the lawyer brought his *action* against the zealous Brandon, tried before Sir James Mansfield and a special jury, in the Court of Common Pleas, on the 5th day of December. Sir James Mansfield charged the jury strongly in favour of the *defendant*; but in case their verdict should be for the plaintiff, he requested them to say, whether it was on the ground of Mr. Clifford's *not* being concerned in the riot, or of his not being apprehended before he was *out* of the theatre. This *special* jury found a verdict for the plaintiff, damages five pounds, amid

the loudest acclamation from the crowd in court; and the foreman, with reference to his Lordship's request, said that being *unanimous* as to the illegal apprehension of Mr. Clifford, they did not decisively *discern* the other point of his *implication* in the riot.

The learned judge felt excessively hurt at the matter's being left as equivocal as ever; and apprehended that the dangerous delusion already gone forth, might, in consequence of this sort of decision, still continue.

Mr. Kemble had come down to the trial with his usual fearlessness; but he could not put his head into the Court; and as his "excellent good friends" came out in triumph, received with indifference, or contempt, or pity, the gentlemanly salutations of the faction. He now told me, that his mind was made up.

The usual course of confusion had been repeated, nightly, with little variation, to the 13th inst. inclusive.

On the 14th, however, a public dinner was to take place at the Crown and Anchor, to which were invited all those who disapproved of the conduct of the managers and proprietors of the theatre; and it was announced that Henry Clifford, a *barrister at law!* was to be in the chair.

The company consisted of about 300 persons.

Mr. Clifford took the chair; and after the cloth was removed, gave the health of the king; which was received with great applause.

Mr. Clifford then informed the company, that, in consequence of his having been chosen to preside at that meeting, he had that morning received a message from Mr. Kemble, who had expressed a great desire to attend this meeting, could he be guaranteed in a polite reception, and preserved from insult and injury. He (Mr. Clifford) as their chairman, had, upon this, *ventured* to assure him that his reception and entertainment should be such as one gentleman ought to receive from *others;* if he were supported in this pledge, he would immediately desire Mr. Kemble, who was in the house, to be invited to meet them, and, if possible, carry into effect those conciliatory measures which the proprietors were inclined to adopt.

A show of hands being made upon this subject, the room unanimously agreed to receive Mr. Kemble, and to treat him with every mark of politeness and respect, as they were pledged to do by their chairman.

Soon after this, Mr. Kemble entered the room, and was received with as much applause as ever marked his finest

piece of acting on the stage. He advanced to the top of the room, and took his seat on the right hand of Mr. Clifford.

Mr. Clifford then addressed the meeting again. As Mr. Kemble was now in the room, he would inform them of the substance of what had passed at the interview he had with that gentleman.—Mr. Kemble had expressed himself sincerely sorry for the interruption occasioned to that good understanding which had ever existed between the public and the stage. He had, also, on the part of himself and his fellow proprietors, expressed a strong desire to do every thing in their power to conciliate the public, and restore that harmony and unison of feeling, which had heretofore been so happily common to them.

A conversation ensued which does not merit to be preserved, besides that the pith of it is found in the resolutions brought in by a committee, which had retired for the purpose of framing them.

Mr. Clifford, in proposing them from the chair, commenced by saying, that he considered them as perfectly equitable; and on a call being made for the *names* of the committee, he observed, that he did not *know* all their names; but the meeting might be satisfied with their independency and public spirit, when he told them that they were the *same gentlemen* who were entrusted with the management of the funds subscribed on the *Westminster election!!*

The resolutions were then read as follow:—

"We presume that the public will be satisfied with these, if acceded to on the part of the proprietors this evening, viz.

"I. That the private boxes shall be reduced to the same state as they were in the year 1802.—[This Mr. Clifford explained to be before Mr. Kemble went to Covent Garden, which he did in that year.]

"II. That the pit shall be 3*s.* 6*d.* the *boxes* 7*s.*—[Much noise and clamour, and some opposition to the latter part.]

"III. That an apology shall be made, on the part of the proprietors, to the public; and Mr. Brandon *shall be dismissed.*—[Great applause.]

"IV. That all prosecutions and actions, on both sides, shall be quashed."

Owing to the tokens of disapprobation at the latter part of the second resolution, the chairman put them, *seriatim*, to the vote of the meeting; and they were carried, almost unanimously; some *dozen of hands* only being held up in opposition to the continuance of the box price at 7*s.*

Mr. Clifford said, that, having submitted these propositions

of the committee to the consideration of the managers, he begged leave to propose, as a toast,

"May this day's meeting produce a reconciliation between the managers of Covent Garden Theatre and the public, equally advantageous to both."

This toast was drunk with three cheers.

Mr. Kemble then stood up, amidst great applause, an said—

"Gentlemen,

"Before I withdraw for the purpose of making the necessary preparations for stating the arrangement that has taken place, in to-morrow's newspapers, I beg leave to express to you my hope, which I do from the bottom of my heart, that the propositions now agreed to will lay the foundation of a lasting good understanding between the public and the theatre. [Plaudits.] I have also to return to you, personally, my best thanks, for the kind and polite treatment I have received since I came into this room."

Mr. Kemble then withdrew, with shouts and clapping from the company. "His health," however, was previously given by the chairman; and "Thanks to him for the handsome manner in which he had come forward on this occasion." This toast was received with a burst of approbation; and soon after, the majority of the meeting departed.

The noise and tumult at the new theatre this night by no means rose to the excess which many apprehended, in consequence of the meeting and dinner which took place at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, and from whence it was expected the company would have proceeded to the theatre in a formidable body. The interruption during the play was partial, and proceeded principally from the communications made almost every minute from the Crown and Anchor company to the pit. At length the universal cry was "Mr. Kemble, Mr. Kemble;" and at the end of the first act of the farce, Mr. Kemble made his appearance, in his walking-dress—half-boots, great-coat, round hat, and cane, as he had come from the tavern. It required near half an hour to procure—what was universally bawled for—*silence*. At length he said—

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"I ask a thousand pardons for presuming to appear before you in a dress so little suitable to the very high respect which I feel, and which it is my anxious wish ever to show you in this place."—After some interruption, but all from the incessant demand for silence, he resumed—"It is entirely owing to the circumstance of my not being apprized that I should have the honour of appearing before you this night. Ladies and gentlemen, I have been with the company of gen-

tlemen who have dined together at the Crown and Anchor Tavern; where a set of propositions were submitted to us for consideration, and to which the proprietors have agreed. The first proposition, is, that the boxes should continue at 7*s*." [Applauses and murmurs.] "That the pit should be lowered to the old price; that the tier of private boxes, *(the tier of boxes in the front of the house,)* should be thrown open and restored to the public at the end of the present season. And, ladies and gentlemen, that no trace or recollection of the unfortunate differences, which have unhappily prevailed so long, should remain, I am further to say, that we most sincerely *lament the course that has been pursued;* and we engage that all legal proceedings shall forthwith be put a stop to on the part of the proprietors; I pledge myself that instructions to that effect shall be given immediately." [Applause.] "Now, ladies and gentlemen, before I retire, give me leave to express my most lively sense—" Here a tumult arose, which Mr. Kemble was unable to appease; he therefore bowed and retired:—he no doubt distinguished clearly enough the sacrifice demanded amidst all this fury, and perhaps hoped something from not *then* meeting the question. He was mistaken;—there was no *mercy* for any one.

The only object of any great moment now, was the dismission of poor Brandon; the zeal with which he had discharged his duty to his employers, was an offence that admitted of no pardon. Mr. Munden attempted to introduce him for the purpose of reading an apology which he held in his hand. This detestable rabble received him with a perfect storm of execration; they threw at him oranges and sticks, so that his life became in danger; the good creature was compelled to withdraw. Mr. Munden soon after introduced to them Mr. Henry Harris; that gentleman, with an air of much submission, ventured to tell them that Mr. Brandon was an old and faithful servant of his father's. The answer to this was, "He must be dismissed," it is a *sine qua non*, discharge him. Mr. Harris bowed and retired.

On the following night, as soon as Mr. Kemble appeared in Penruddock, the usual savage war-whoop of the O. P.'s was resumed: the calumet of peace was never to be smoked, unless Brandon was discharged. Quiet, not order, being at length restored, Mr. Kemble addressed them in these few words:

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"Having had the misfortune to incur your displeasure, Mr. Brandon has withdrawn himself from the office of box-book and house-keeper to the theatre."

By making this sacrifice the first act of the play passed with little interruption.

Emboldened by this success, they now resolved that the manager should drink the cup of bitterness even to its dregs, and they accordingly demanded a specific apology for the employment, as they said, of Jews and boxers to coerce the public.

Mr. Kemble immediately came forward, and spoke to the following effect:

"I understand your displeasure now arises, gentlemen, that an apology has not yet been made for the introduction of improper persons to this theatre. I ask your pardon for not having made it sooner; and I now, in my own name, and on the part of the other proprietors, most humbly apologise for the same; we are very sorry for what is passed, and beg leave to assure you that inclination and duty will alike render it our first pride, for the time to come, to prevent any thing of the kind from occurring again."

Mr. Kemble was here cheered by a universal huzza, and the O. P.'s, who came prepared for their victory, hoisted a large placard in the pit, with the words inscribed,

"We are satisfied."

In the course of the evening this ratification of the peace was a second and third time displayed, and amidst universal shouts of joy the curtain dropped that night upon the disgraces of the stage.

CHAP. VIII.

A miscellaneous chapter.—Pronunciation.—Aches, Mr. Kemble's own defence of that dissyllable.—Passage in Macbeth.—His notion as to emphasis.—Roman character.—Mr. Kemble particularly devoted to its three finest displays, Coriolanus, Brutus, and Cato.—The author's view of the Cato.—Mr. Kemble mentally and personally considered, to show the radical differences between Mr. Garrick and himself.—The sportive exuberances of the one—the reserve of the other as to mimicry.—How courted by the great.—His reception at Carleton-house.

After the conclusion of so fierce a storm as that which we have just described, the reader may be glad of an opportunity to discuss some points of a pure literary character, in which Mr. Kemble himself will assign his reasons for a peculiar pronunciation, or a preferable emphasis.

We have just seen, that the rioters who advocated the old prices, had, among other qualities, assumed those of the critic, and made themselves, at all events, extremely merry with the sound of the word aches. Among the performances of Mr. Kemble, his Prospero, in the Tempest, had excited remarkable notice from the groundlings, not so much from the awful dignity, or paternal goodness which were certainly to be found in it, as from a single word in a speech of the Magician to Caliban, which Mr. Kemble dared to pronounce agreeably to the intention of Shakspeare. It occurs in the second scene of the first act.

> "If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly
> What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps;
> Fill all thy bones with achës; make thee roar,
> That beasts shall tremble at thy din."

The reader here sees, that the line would be incomplete, if the disputed word were not pronounced as one of two syllables. The more modern *akes* can only have the power of a monosyllable. It would at this time of day be assuredly useless to recapitulate, from either the ancient or modern writers, the numerous proofs of Mr. Kemble's accuracy.—

He was commonly, but very erroneously supposed to be a man extremely gratified by scholastic peculiarity, and a sort of knowledge far fetched, and worth but very little. Few men of his time were less addicted to inquiries of such a nature. On the subject of this painful word *aches*, disputes often arose in society, and the topic, as is usual, was argued with more heat than knowledge: on one such occurrence, the difference of opinion terminated in a bet; the most proper thing in the world; as presumption ought undoubtedly to pay for its ignorance, or its obstinacy. Mr. Rees, of Paternoster Row, although sufficiently confident as to Mr. Kemble's practice and its motive, addressed a letter to him, late in his dramatic life, the answer to which I insert here for the sake of closer reference to a disputed matter.

(COPY.)

"My dear sir,

"I never do pronounce the word *aches* in two syllables (like the word *aitches*), but when the metre of a verse (that is, but when the *measure* of the poetry or verse) requires it. So much for the wager.

"The old pronunciation of the word *aches* in two syllables is so entirely laid aside in common conversation, and in all modern use, that it would be ridiculous indeed to use it familiarly, and idle to attempt its revival in poetical composition: yet when the word occurs as a dissyllable in our elder poets, it must be so pronounced; because in a metrical work the metre must be observed. These lines are in Pope's Essay on Man:

> 'Ask of thy mother earth, why oaks are made
> Taller or stronger than the weeds they shade?
> Or ask of yonder argent fields above,
> Why Jove's *satellites* are less than Jove.'

"The word satellites is now-a-days pronounced in three syllables, and a man would be a coxcomb to affect to pronounce it otherwise; but it was pronounced as four in Mr. Pope's time, and he employs it as four—and a man would be thought very ignorant, who, in reciting Mr. Pope's lines, should destroy their metre, by giving this word its modern pronunciation. If the old use and pronunciation of the word *aches* can be decided by authority, I should think Baret, in his Alvearie, F. 1580, conclusive on the question.

> 'The ache, or payne of body or minde, &c.'
> 'To have ache, payne or griefe, &c.—Vide *Ake*.'

And under Ake, to which the reader is referred "Ake is the verbe of this substantive Aches, *ch* being turned into *k*,' &c.

"So that it appears that anciently the monosyllable and dissyllable pronunciation distinguished the verb and substantive.

"I beg pardon for taking up your time with so much of this uninteresting matter.

"I am, my dear sir,
"Yours, truly,
(Signed) "J. P. KEMBLE."

"May 13, 1816,
No. 89, Great Russel Street, Bloomsbury Square.

"*Owen Rees, Esq.*
Paternoster Row."

I shall not think it necessary to do more, when Mr. Kemble's own defence has been considered, than to recapitulate the authorities on which his practice was grounded; namely, Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Ford, Davenant, Dryden, Otway and Swift. Perhaps, however, the reader may pardon the insertion of two passages, which I myself discovered in Hudibras.

"Can by their pains and aches find
All turns and changes of the mind."

Again,

"As other flames and aches prove."

It is not a little remarkable, that Mr. Kemble, for twenty years together, whenever he acted the character of Jaffier in Venice Preserved, had given the same pronunciation to this unhappy word, when in the first scene of the second act he thus imprecates disasters upon Priuli.

"Kind heaven, let heavy curses
Gall his old age! cramps, aches rack his bones!
And bitterest disquiet wring his heart."

But I never heard a *breath* of displeasure there; the storm seemed to wait only upon the Tempest. Perhaps my friend may be excused, after the long and painful studies he had made, if he did not expect much instruction from a mixed au-

dience; or seek for any steady illumination from the hurried decisions of the daily critic. Indeed, he very rarely looked into a newspaper.

It is often extremely difficult to find ears nice enough, to observe how much the elevation of the voice renders *emphasis* unnecessary; the higher key does all that is expected from the pointed impulse. A very ingenious friend of ours, for whom Mr. Kemble entertained the highest regard—in his studies of Shakspeare thought he had found a new point, by placing a strong emphasis on the word *bid*, in the following passage of Macbeth—

> "Macbeth shall never vanquished be, until
> Great Birnham wood to high Dunisane hill
> Shall come against him.
>
> *Macb.*— That will never be:
> Who can impress the forest; bid the tree
> Unfix his earth-bound root?"

I have no opportunity of offering to the reader the arguments by which our friend supported his opinion. Mr. Kemble's answer, however, to them, was as follows:

"My dear Taylor,

"Don't you see, that '*bidding the tree unfix his earth-bound root*' is but an amplification, as it were, of '*impressing the forest*'—and consequently, that no emphasis is necessary? All unnecessary emphasis must be bad emphasis; for unless some contradistinction is understood by it, it becomes nonsensical. You would not expect, perhaps, to find *me* an enemy to ingenious discoveries in this kind. but the truth is, that a poet's literal meaning requires little emphasis, to be thoroughly understood to an audience; the emphasis I wish to see cultivated is of that sort that swells the passion of the scene, and ennobles the sentiment.

"Yours, J. P. Kemble."

Dec. 23d, 1795.
13, Caroline street, Bedford Square.

"I am confined to my room by a bad cough, and can't act to-night—you might call for half an hour."

I have myself no kind of doubt of the propriety of Mr. Kemble's decision. "To *bid* the tree unfix his earth-bound root" is, as he remarks, but an amplification; or, as I should say, an *illustration* of the words "impress the forest:"—for let us consider the meaning of the whole passage, and Dr.

Johnson's interpretation of the first member of it may decide as to that which follows.

He says—"Who can command the forest to serve him like a soldier impressed?" To which I may add, *that is*, bid the *trees*, of which it is composed, *unfix* their earth-bound *roots*. A mere illustration of the previous passage.

Thus the reader sees, that to "impress the forest" necessarily implies the *unfixing* of its *roots*, without which, its leafy inhabitants could never march away, to subdue or terrify Macbeth.

In the latter part of Mr. Kemble's career, he seems to have devoted himself with infinite solicitude, to the impersonation of the Roman character. Coriolanus had, indeed, for many years been considered as a performance absolutely unparalleled. The high patrician pride of that hero leads him to venture every thing for the Roman NAME; but he *thinks* only of the senate, and the triumphs of their arms: for the multitude he has no affection, but as they promote his objects, and are the ready slaves of his ambition. He therefore looks with jealousy upon every popular encroachment, and cannot submit to ask with courtesy for even that which the people are lawfully empowered to bestow. Such men are not at all suited to a free government; and, with amazing inconsistency, they despise other nations for wanting those *very* popular rights, which, personally, they feel disposed at home to *deny* and to *resist*. These men value their services at a rate, which the free can never be expected to pay. That sort of fame, which exists but in the popular breath, becomes at length despised from its certainty; and the victor resiles from a cheap and vulgar reward, to gratify his vanity in lonely abstraction, or the permitted applause of a privileged order. In such a frame of mind, disappointment excites a perfect frenzy in the soul; the principles, which produced the *hero* at his outset, lose their influence for a season, and the man will sometimes hurry even into treason for the sole delight of unnatural vengeance. But he is equally insecure either as a friend or an enemy; when fighting against his COUNTRYMEN, he will allow no one to despise his COUNTRY: a word will revive the original incentive to virtue, and the renegade must be sacrificed by those whom he had served at the hazard of infamy.

The severe character of CATO allowed of no paltering with the freedom of his country: he lived only to promote it.—Always full of energy, he had erected its standard in Africa, and drawn every possible advantage during the long fascination in which Cæsar was held by Cleopatra. When the

amazing fortune, or abilities, of the first and greatest of the Cæsars, had subdued even the very hope of resistance, he opened for himself a passage to a purer atmosphere, and died as heroically as he had lived.

Mr. Gibbon has taken the pains to point out some instances in which BRUTUS, the nephew of this great man, did not act upon the noble principles of his uncle—in which he condescended to accept an important trust from the hands of Cæsar, the command of the Cisalpine Gaul. That great captain, at this time, had set out for the African war. If Cato had made an irruption into Italy, would his nephew have marched his legions to repulse him; or by his inaction have betrayed the trust reposed in him? Was the conduct of Cæsar *ever* ambiguous? Could Brutus on this subject differ from his uncle Cato? Why was the latter in arms, but that Cæsar was ambitious? Was his assassination *only* the glory of Brutus?

With a rather amiable inconsistency the Roman historian regrets that there should be any doubt as to the famous letters from Brutus, in which his patriotism is exhibited by himself as superior to all compromise—and he declares, "that were his father alive again, he would not suffer him to possess a power above the laws and the senate." Indeed, when he examines the conduct of his friend Cicero, he hardly treats him with respect—as a man, who is not impatient of a master, but only anxious that he should be a person whom he could influence by his counsels. Brutus, on this head, sees little difference between Antony and Octavius.

With respect to Mr. Kemble's performance of these illustrious stoics, I can have no doubt that his Cato was the superior effort. Superlatives are continually in our mouths—"the present eye praises the present object," and I can by no means be sure that I have not exhausted the vocabulary of praise, in speaking of Kemble's Coriolanus. In the busy variety, too, the rush of passion, the quick transition of character, Coriolanus has an immense scope, and offers to such an actor infinite advantages. But Cato stands before me with a venerable unity of principle and purpose, that demands and receives our perfect veneration. From the opening speech to the last there was not a line, which Mr. Kemble did not seem to have studied, as if conscious of that Superior Intelligence, whom Seneca presumed to contemplate, with satisfaction, the acts of the divine Cato.

> "No common object to your sight displays,
> But what with pleasure Heaven itself surveys;
> A brave man struggling in the storms of fate,
> And greatly falling with a falling state!" POPE'S *Pral.*

Dr. Johnson has an allusion to this character, which bears upon his representative on the stage; it may be found in *the* preface to Shakspeare. "Familiar comedy (says that great critic) is often more powerful on the theatre, than in the page; imperial tragedy is always less. The humour of Petruchio may be heightened by grimace; but what voice or what gesture can hope to add dignity or force to the soliloquy of Cato?"

I think I am able to answer this question truly in a word:—Mr. KEMBLE's. Indeed I may fearlessly produce his opening scene of the 5th act, as the unrivalled wonder of his art—as an effort surpassing the highest wrought imagination, and carrying the British stage to the summit of its glory.

Addison's best editor assumes, that "Cato will be supremely admired by all candid and judicious critics, not as a *tragedy*, for which the subject was unfit, but as a work of art and taste." If he had seen Mr. Kemble's performance, he must have questioned his tragic *exclusion* of Addison; and have admitted, with the grateful terror, the severe delight, of a mind like his, the utmost sublimity of *tragedy*, in the scene with Decius, the second of the 2d act:—the fourth scene of the 4th act, where he meets the *corpse* of his son; and that to which I have already, I hope, excited the utmost attention. I trust that few of my readers have missed an opportunity, which is so little likely to recur:—to those, who *have* witnessed Mr. Kemble, and enjoyed the emotions he excited by the following lines, I may *recall* the music of virtuous feeling, as it swelled upon the organ of the great actor, and raised humanity above itself.

CATO, *meeting the corpse.*

"Welcome, my son! here lay him down, my friends,
Full in my sight, that I may view at leisure
The bloody corse, and count those *glorious* wounds.
How beautiful is death, when earned by virtue!"

The little struggle with *nature* for a moment—the *advance*, to meet the honour to his name—the "full in my sight"—the "*glorious* wounds," and the soothing tranquillity of the last line, in which virtue becomes taste, and taste virtue—only his own voice and gesture have ever been able to convey.

On such an occasion it is melancholy, not merely for the actor, but mankind, that the record lives *only* in the increasing feebleness of the memory, and the insensible departures of imitation. The painter's art can give only the gesture and

expression of an instant. Happily, our friend, Sir Thomas Lawrence, has preserved the most absolute *identity* in his portrait of Mr. Kemble revolving the profound doctrine of Plato on the immortality of the soul; and I know of no subject, even from his own pencil, which surpasses it either in dignity or truth.

Having thus fully expressed my admiration of this great and transcendent effort of Mr. Kemble's genius, I shall not avoid a subject upon which I know that I am expected to touch—one that brings Mr. Kemble, as an actor and a man, in a degree of comparison with the greatest of his predecessors.

When the death of Garrick was said to have "eclipsed the gaiety of nations," the expression was more *literal*, than it was commonly supposed to be. That great man practised his art wherever he was; and what Diderot, I think, calls his *singerie sublime*, rendered him the faithful representative of all human passions and conditions. Indeed, he seemed to *sport* with the emotions he excited, and delighted to pass instantaneously from the horrors of Macbeth's visionary dagger, to the ludicrous disaster of a pie-man's apprentice, who, gaping inconsiderately about him, lets his crowded board of pastry fall into the kennel. Such is the faithful report of Grimm in the year 1765, to his friendly patron the Duke of Saxe Gotha.

While Mr. Garrick was in Paris, Carmontel made a sketch of him, standing in a tragic attitude, and on the same canvass, between folding doors, a comic Garrick, who has surprised *himself* in his serious mood, and is laughing at his gravity. While he was sitting to this artist, he would not, perhaps could not, remain still an instant, but amused himself, to the great astonishment of the Frenchman, in passing, by a variety of gradations, from the extreme of joy to that of sadness, and kindling his expression onward even to the agonies of horror and despair. This may be called the gamut of the actor, for why should there not be a scale of the passions, as well as one of successive sounds?

I have often in life been considerably annoyed, during the nightly display of my friend's talents, by the *confidence* with which my own cotemporaries, and even juniors, spoke of the powers of Mr. Garrick. Some strong and pointed expression on such occasions was commonly found, by which a question seems for ever decided; and the present excellence is sacrificed to the past, wantonly, unnecessarily, and perhaps unjustly. To such very decisive persons, it may not seem improper to have remarked as follows:—"All this may be as

you have stated it. But pardon me, if I venture to ask, knowing, I think, your age, how did you, at the requisite period of observation, acquire your *knowledge* of the art? Time now has ripened your faculties, and I can readily admit your present discernment, in proportion to your particular study of the science. I say *particular* study, because I shall have to show, if I mistake not, as to this very art of acting, the greatest minds hurried away by an enthusiasm, that, as usual, permitted no actual operation of the judgment; and made even some of the greatest orators of this country prefer a boy of thirteen to Mr. Garrick himself."

Let not the reader for a single minute conceive that I say this, to insinuate a doubt as to the real talents of Mr. Garrick. I was early taught, on the competent judgment of Mr. Henderson, to know him, for the *great* and *general* master of his art. Such is my tendency to admire him, that I put aside the declaration of Dr. Johnson, as to his power in soliloquy; and for my own part do not believe "that one of his scene-shifters, or any person, occupied in the scene upon his stage, could have spoken the 'To be, or not to be' of Hamlet so well as it was given by Mr. Garrick."

Nor is it necessary to Mr. Kemble's *fame*, that his immortal predecessor should be in the slightest degree undervalued. I see that they were, from nature, and habit, and peculiar studies, essentially different from each other—that the element of the one actor, if I may so say, was DIGNITY, and of the other, PASSION. I speak here of radical distinction between the men; because I as easily believe that Mr. Garrick could become *dignified*, as I am sure that Mr. Kemble could be *impassioned*. Still their qualities were, in the main, as strongly discriminated as their persons.

But to look farther into the habits of these great men. Johnson objected to Garrick's being admitted into his club: "He will disturb us," said he, "by his buffoonery." He would not have objected to Mr. Kemble. The notions formed by these great actors, of the art they professed, were totally adverse. Mr. Garrick carried its exercise into social mimicry, and the eternal desire to govern the muscles of every being with which he came in contact. He would play Punch rather than not be acting; and seek an audience to his merriment among the *servants*, if their masters were too desperately grave for him to venture to break in upon them.

This is to be a *comedian;* a mind of complexional hilarity, happy alone in the exercise of its powers. Such also was the mind of Henderson; he assumed to himself the power of entertaining, not as a task, but a privilege, and poured himself

out in the most ludicrous delineations of life, in all its endless diversity. Mr. Kemble would have thought himself *degraded* by any exhibitions of such a nature; he was impressed with a higher sense of the *dignity* and *utility* of his art; and had not found it so easily acquired, as to be an object of *sport* and *momentary assumption*:—he, therefore, put on the actor only with the dress of the *theatre*, and was contented in society with such distinction as the scholar and the gentleman could acquire. He carried this feeling to a very unusual extent; for he could rarely be brought even to *recite* in company, but would very calmly take down the book for you, which contained a remarkable passage, and tell you to read it for *yourself*. During thirty years of very unrestrained intercourse, I do not remember his lending even his countenance above three times to any imitation; the best of these occurred, when he one day described to me the glorious sculpture at Strawberry Hill, of Henry the Seventh worn to the bone by avarice and care. He, on that occasion, did say, "Stop; I think I can give you the expression." The look he assumed was singular, and not to be forgotten. When I subsequently visited Strawberry Hill, I immediately recognised the head; and found that he had neither said, nor done too much, for the character of that amazing effort of art.

Although we should be cautious in assigning limits to either nature or art, yet I shall, perhaps, be justified in saying, that the powers of Kemble and Matthews cannot combine together. There is a mental elevation in the one that cannot stoop to the other. I shall surprise many by the remark I am going to make, but I am clearly of opinion, that there was more *nature* even than *art* in his performances—by which I mean, that his *own* nature greatly influenced all his happiest exhibitions. They who knew him intimately often smiled at the theatre, to see the *man* so visible in the character. As a hint thrown out for his verification, the reader may amuse himself, by thus discriminating occasional *looks*, and *tones*, and *gestures*, through a considerable range of characters, extending from the Plain Dealer, Penruddock, the Stranger, and others of the meditative class, onward to the deep and revolving wisdom of Cato. In all of these, he himself, as I may say, furnished much that was characteristic: *not* by the assumption of what was *foreign* to his nature, but by lending his *own* properties to be the ground-work, which art was to extend and improve. He had much of the *mind*, that informs these characters; and therefore, when he acted them, they seemed in a great degree to be developments of himself. No, I can never regret that he did not descend from this eminence to

mark, with either sport or malice, the unfortunate peculiarities of private life. He had, indeed, no temptation whatever to such an abuse of talent. The great, who sought the society of Mr. Kemble, sought it on the only terms which could be honourable to themselves or him. So it was at Wroxton Abbey that he was welcomed by Lord Guilford :—thus it was that, in the life-time of the late Marquis of Abercorn, he was the happy and honoured guest at the Priory. It was thus that Lord Holland knew and loved Mr. Kemble ; thus that the accomplished Earl of Aberdeen, Lord Egremont, Lord Blessington, and a long list of his noble admirers, bestowed a lasting and most cordial *friendship* with their notice. And it was for these perfections of the man, his graceful calmness, his unobtrusive wisdom, his steady principle, and unshakeable attachment, that he was honoured by the PRINCE OF WALES with invitations to Carleton House, and distinguished by attentions as tasteful as they were gracious. On one occasion, his royal highness, I have heard, smilingly said to Mr. Kemble—"I am afraid that, before so correct a speaker of the English language, I have mispronounced occasionally during our conversation." "Indeed," with great frankness, "Indeed, NO, sir," replied Mr. Kemble, "I have heard but a single word in which I at all differ from your royal highness ; and about *that* people are allowed to differ ; the word *oblige ;* which I pronounce in the English, and not in the *French* way."

It is to be remarked, with respect to the pronunciation attributed to the illustrious speaker, that Sheridan, in his dictionary, gives *both* the modes of speaking the word, without an absolute preference, or decision — oblīge and oblēge. It is added that, on a subsequent visit, the Prince condescended to take a pinch of snuff from the gold box with which he had presented Mr. Kemble, and sportively remembered the word in question, by saying, "I am obliged to you, Mr. Kemble."

This I give as I received it, not, in course, from Mr. Kemble himself, from whom such a communication was not to be expected ; but I give full credit to the anecdote, because I find it characteristic of the gracious manners of the GREAT PERSONAGE to whom it refers ; and expressive of Mr. Kemble's nature, who knew how to combine a manly sincerity with the most profound respect.

CHAP. IX.

Situation of the Covent Garden Theatre.—Reconciliation dinner.—More persecution.—Lewis punishes the Liverpool rioters.—Cooke shipt off to America.—The horses.—Julius Cæsar.—H. Tooke.—Malone.—Retirement of Mrs. Siddons.—A poetical address.—New Drury opened.—Lord Byron's verses.—Mr. Kemble leaves Covent Garden for a time.—His return and honours.—French tributes.—Mr. Kean.—His opening.—How aided.—Miss O'Neill—Anecdote.—Death of Mr. Sheridan.—Mr. Kemble takes leave of the stage—At Edinburgh and in London.—Deputation from Drury Lane.—Public dinner.—Goes to the south of France.—His letter to his brother.—Mr. Harris dies.—Mr. Kemble divests himself of his share in Covent Garden.—Negotiation for his old Plays.—Sale of his books and prints.—Visits Italy.—Return and death.—His servant Rousham.—Conclusion.

I MUST now revert a little to the old evil, to show how short all conciliation must have been as to giving the proprietors what was *vital* to the concern. That persons, who refuse sixpence of their *own* in the pit, will give a shilling for *others* in the boxes, need excite little wonder. Perhaps, as to the box-frequenters, the shilling, where it was paid, did but compensate slightly for the enormous increase of free admissions, or cheap admissions. Generally speaking, the nightly receipts are not increased. But the blow which was not to be recovered, was the proscription of the private boxes. It is a mortifying proof of human weakness, to consider this subject and its frustration. The proprietors had built like the projectors of Babel, and the *confusion of tongues* ensued. They had deemed themselves sure of twenty-six boxes at 400*l.* per annum, amounting to 10,400*l.* What a charming relief, in a season, which, as to the nightly receipts, perhaps produced NOTHING! They had engaged Madame Catalani, that opera frequenters, with all and more than their usual privacy, might miss no part of their accustomed delight; and thus, perhaps, tore away from the King's Theatre many of its greatest supporters. The nerve of Mr. Taylor, however invigorated by his native north, must have been shaken a little by so alarming an invasion. Who even

could surmise its end? The drama, enjoyed with the same comfort as to the opera, might at length become as eligible; and the classical projectors in Covent Garden might even *precede* the Haymarket in the engagement of any continental prodigy in music or the dance.

Instead of all this, existing but in fancy, we have in future to bear in mind the vast accession of burthen upon the proprietors, with no other relief than could be drawn from very powerful efforts. All the fascinating captivation of their gorgeous theatre blighted; the charm of novelty dispelled untried; a lingering displeasure felt as to the price of admission; and a jealousy as to the few annual boxes, which were still to be retained. It is true that, for a few seasons, the greatest display of their mature talents might yet be hoped from Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. What leading incidents still claim particular notice, to the retirement of those great performers, I now proceed to relate.

On the 4th of January 1810, the rioters invited Mr. Kemble and Mr. Henry Harris to what was called a *reconciliation* dinner; but, by a toast, they marked the displeasure that a learned judge had excited, in the action of Clifford against Brandon; and upon Charles Bonnor's venturing to suppose, on the authority of Johnson, that reconciliation did not mean *rankling hatred*, they scouted his humane effort in favour of James Brandon, and would not on the *present* occasion listen to such a subject. A renewal, however, of the persecution as to the annual or private boxes took place on the following September, and they insisted on the strict performance of the original contract, *three* private boxes on each side. The proprietors made the attempt to evade it on the plea that parliament had, by the act for rebuilding Drury Lane Theatre, recognised the right to let annual boxes. On the liberality of a properly constituted public, these gentlemen had a claim, which in all probability would have been allowed; but as they could appeal only to a representative body self-elected,—inflated by success, and furious at resistance, they tried the experiment for a week—and then, shutting the house for one more, opened on the 24th of September with a *literal* performance of the contract.

It probably was the safer course for them to take; yet at this very time, Lewis had obtained a complete triumph at Liverpool over *his* O. P.s, and had it in his option to convict them of conspiracy; but, at the recommendation of Mr. Baron Graham, the count in the information for conspiracy was given up, and the defendants found guilty only of the riot. I have the *pleasure* to record that, in the November following, Mr. Attorney General brought them up for judgment, and that two of the

offenders were sentenced to be imprisoned each *twelve* months in the Castle of Lancaster, another couple for three months, and two more worthies in the same place for two months each. I shall never cease to regret, that the same *direct* course could not be taken, or taken with equal effect, against the leaders of the London conspiracy; who, in the language of the Attorney General, were men systematically deluding the unwary, and who, with nothing but liberty in their mouths, were in disposition, and principle, and practice, the veriest and most unfeeling tyrants in the world.

That devoted being, Cooke, had, in the beginning of the year, sullied the *Roman Father* with drunkenness, and made his peace in Richard III.: but, on the opening of the next season, after having announced on the 30th of September to Mr. Henry Harris his intention with Mr. Munden to go to town from Liverpool on the Tuesday following; on the 3d of October, positively *sober* (so Mr. Cooper says), he was, *not* inviegled, but *conveyed*, secretely on board a vessel bound for New York, unknown even to his friends at Liverpool, and shipt off by the American manager with a skill that baffled all resistance. The treaty between them had commenced, it seems, in the month of August; but I must presume, on the 30th of September, was conceived by Mr. Cooke himself to be at an end. Mr. Cooper was properly anxious on this occasion to vindicate himself from any suspicion of practising upon infirmity; beside that there is a pecuniary temptation about our transatlantic stages, that the profession seemed unable to resist. The Latin adage was verified completely in poor Cooke; he changed none of his habits either on the voyage or in America—skiey influences were not felt by such a mind; and to the astonished Americans he displayed all the professional power and personal inconsistency and debasement, that alternately delighted and provoked the people of England.

On the 18th of February 1811, in pursuance of a plan, which after long meditation they had determined to adopt, the proprietors of this theatre revived the dramatic romance of Blue Beard, with hitherto unequalled splendour. There had certainly been in the mind of Mr. Kemble, a strong reluctance to innovate upon the usual entertainment of a theatre royal; and it is highly probable, that could the concern have been allowed to carry their original plan into effect, they might never have resorted to the attractions of the amphitheatre; but persecuted as they had been, rather than encouraged, the scruples of exact taste unwillingly gave way, and the horses were introduced into the establishments of the theatre. Early in the second act of Blue Beard, sixteen most beautiful horses mounted by *spahis*

suddenly appeared before the spectators, and were received with immense applause; their various and incessant action produced a delightful effect upon the eye; and when they were afterwards seen ascending the heights with inconceivable velocity, the audience were in raptures, as at the achievement of a wonder. Subsequently, however, they seemed still more astonished at the sagacity, or recollection, of the noble animals before them; —in the charge, some of the horses appeared to be wounded, and with admirable imitation fainted gradually away. One of them, who in the anguish of his wounds had thrown off his rider, and was dying on the field, on hearing the report of a pistol sprung suddenly upon his feet, as if again to join, or enjoy the battle; but his ardour not being seconded by strength, he fell again as if totally exhausted. It is hardly necessary to say more upon the subject, than that this splendid novelty was completely successful, and showed to the proprietors that means, however irregular, still might be found, to compensate in some degree, the losses they had sustained.

The revival of Cato, and the effect of Mr. Kemble's performance, I have conceived to merit a particular investigation; my opinion is already before the reader. On the 29th of February, 1812, Mr. Kemble revived the tragedy of Julius Cæsar; he had, as usual, made some very judicious alterations and arrangements in the piece, and in his own performance of *Brutus*, exhibited all that purity of patriotism and philosophy, which has been, not without some hesitation, attributed to that illustrious name. Julius Cæsar is almost single, among the dramas of Shakspeare, in the possession of three male characters, of nearly equal force. This theatre, however in the persons of Mr. Young, and Mr. Charles Kemble, possessed two actors capable of sustaining with equal effect, the impetuous Cassius, and the wily Antony. The other characters of the piece were brought out in their relative proportions; and the stage had realised, perhaps exceeded, the effect of one of the most important scenes of antiquity.

I step a little out of the range of theatrical concerns to notice the death of Mr. Horne Tooke, on the 18th of March, 1812: for this gentleman, as a grammarian, Mr. Kemble entertained the highest respect. I had lent to him my copy of the Diversions of Purley, that he might fill up from it the blanks which the printer's fear, or caution, had left at the press. His note, returning the books, now lies before me, and I transcribe, with pleasure, his opinion of the work.

"However people may differ with Mr. Tooke in politics, I think it is impossible any reasonable mind should disagree with him on grammar. I wish we may ever have the conclusion of his system! The work would, probaply, be the finest treatise on Philosophical Philology, that ever was, or ever will be written."

I have already stated, that Mr. Kemble was by no means a politician; there was, therefore, but little intimacy between Mr. Tooke and him; the sage of Wimbledon, however, occasionally dined with Mr. Kemble, and at such times was peculiarly delightful, inasmuch as he contented himself with pouring out that *general* stream of knowledge by which his mind was so copiously enriched. On the 25th of May, of the same year, I had the melancholy task of announcing to him the death of our excellent friend, Mr. Malone. I am unable to name, in the large circle of Mr. Kemble's acquaintance, any gentleman for whom he had a more perfect esteem. He frequently alluded, in conversation, to the elegance of his manners; and delighted to quote him, as one of the best illustrations of the old school. As a commentator upon Shakspeare, Mr. Kemble greatly preferred Mr. Malone; because he saw in him unwearied diligence, and the most scrupulous accuracy; with an utter rejection of that impertinent self-display which had discredited, on too many occasions, the wit, the learning, and the labour of some of his rivals.

Mr. Malone could by no means be made a convert to the necessity for enlarging our theatres. His sight had never been very good; and, unfortunately, with a view to keep the works of Shakspeare within reasonable limits, he had, in the year 1790, done the greatest possible injury to his eyes, by selecting types, both for the text and notes of his edition, painfully distressing to the great majority of readers. Whenever, after the play, he walked round to Mr. Kemble's dressing-room, where I have joined him, his usual compliment was, "I dare say it was a very perfect performance; but you have made your houses so large, that, really, I can neither hear nor see in them." Mr. Kemble sometimes smiled when, with the natural feeling of his country, Malone would, while speaking even of Garrick, honour Barry with an occasional parenthesis. The grand theme seemed to be the wonderful beauty of the voice, and its effect in the thrilling ecstacies of love.

The course of events is, as might be expected, tempered to our feelings—intervals in the succession of either our pleasures or our pains keep us from too intense a measure of either joy or sorrow. Under whatever circumstances, it is notwithstanding painful to see the departure of any distinguished talent, and the retirement of Mrs. Siddons from the stage seemed to affect her admirers like the loss of the art she professed. She had frequently intimated her intention to withdraw from the scene; but circumstances had induced her to renew her engagements as the interests of the concern might require. On these occasions, I think she received FIFTY pounds per night, and either

taste or speculation would applaud such an arrangement. However, on the 29th of June, 1812, she took her leave in the character of Lady Macbeth, which she sustained with all wonted energy. After receiving the last proof of her terrific talent, the *perturbed sleep*, the guilt that no weariness could *seal down*, compelled by our unappeasable monitor nightly to repeat its testimony to the murderous fact—the audience would bear no more—they ordered the curtain down, though an act of the play remained unperformed. Mrs. Siddons was to address them, and they were contented to wait in silence until she should be ready to appear again before them. Her farewell was in verse, and written by her nephew, Mr. Twiss—it every way did him credit. There were persons who thought, that a prose address would have been more striking and suitable to such a parting—but I think they did not condider, that there is always something indelicate in sending on a LADY, in her own person, to *talk* to a mixed assembly of some thousand people. Under a pressing sense of injustice and persecution, to come suddenly forward, and with a pledge of your innocence, claim their protection, has a quick feeling to urge it, that absolves the slight indecorum. A poetical address partakes more of dramatic representation—the care as to just recitation, and the uttering the studied composition of another mind, relieves in a great degree the performer's own, and ensures almost the requisite and graceful composure of the last obeisance. The close of this address has but seldom been equalled—and I regret that I am unable to afford space to a larger extract. She thus tenderly appealed to her judges and her friends (the *latter* term here implied both) :—

> " Perhaps your hearts, when years have glided by,
> And past emotions wake a fleeting sigh,
> May think on HER, whose lips have pour'd so long
> The charmed sorrows of your Shakspeare's song;
> On her, who, parting to return no more,
> Is now the mourner she but *seem'd* before,
> Herself subdu'd, resigns the melting spell,
> And breathes, with swelling heart, her long, her last farewell !"

She made her reverences with visible emotion, and Mr. Kemble, with fraternal solicitude, came upon the stage to assist her in quitting a delighted public. The long-continued applauses of the spectators were mingled with the tears of many a gentle bosom; but Mrs. Siddons retired into private life honoured by all ranks, and in the enjoyment of worldly comforts only inferior to her *fame*.

The unavoidable compression of a last chapter compels me to

give only a few lines to a subject, which merits pages of even careful particularity,—I mean the erection of the New Theatre of Drury Lane, by the skill of Benjamin Wyatt; and the steady and unequalled zeal of the late Mr. Whitbread. Nothing short of the high character of the latter gentleman could have raised the necessary funds and inspired confidence where dismay seemed almost a settled impression. However, to his immortal honour, the new Drury rose the creature of his bounty and his love. Who but must regret that the engagements of the Theatre, pressing upon a mind too variously occupied, should even be supposed to have contributed to his melancholy end! I have formerly expressed my steady admiration of its really architectural parts. Its halls of approach, its simple and beautiful staircase, and its saloon. I may therefore be permitted to observe freely, that its stage, in my view at least, could not boast of equal perfection. The great secret, in front of the spectator, is to give the actor his relative importance—he was here lost in an immense space, and the scenery which should have born upon his performance, and given locality to the character, was a diminutive picture, hung behind him at a distance. You might set a wood, for instance, in the background, but the persons of the play, however simply attired, were wandering about under gorgeous vaultings, illuminated by massy tripods in the forms of venerable antiquity. Nor did the architect quite answer the expectations he had raised from his pamphlet—the structure was *not* admirable for the conveyance of the voice—much of the dialogue came imperfectly even to my ear, assisted by a pretty general memory of the language of our drama. However, on the 10th of October, 1812, the house opened with an address from the pen of Lord Byron, spoken by Mr. Elliston. To grace the opening, even the address was an affair of competition; but having formerly diverted myself with the subject, when perusing all the *rejected* addresses, I can only say, that the most nervous lines were clearly those composed by Lord Byron. Although I thus give the preference, where it was bestowed by an intelligent committee, yet I do not think the address worthy either of the poet or the occasion. It is inelegantly splendid, and somewhat tedious; its allusions to the triumphs of former days were not happily put; Lord Byron added nothing discriminate to the praise of Siddons, or Garrick, or Brinsley, as Sheridan was styled for the sake of the verse alone. But I forbear, and content myself with expressing my sincere pleasure that we had once again two theatres worthy of the great capital of the British empire.

Mr. Kemble now seeing that the theatre had got into a steady course of success which allowed of his absence for a time, re-

solved to avail himself of a variety of engagements that courted him, and among them always the most distinguished, his friends in Ireland. Mr. Henry Harris carefully advised him as to their progress in his absence, and to that gentleman, in the year 1813, Mr. Kemble thus replies:

"For Henry Harris, Esq. T. R. C. G. London.

"Dear Sir,

"I am very much obliged to you for taking the trouble of acquainting me with the financial state of the Theatre. I wish, with all my heart, the receipt had been greater, that the proprietors might have been able to extinguish more of the debt:—but what is past is past remedy, and with me always past regret. Hope is a more agreeable companion than repining:—though, from what you tell me of the Drury Lane dividend, I am afraid my chance of finding a purchaser is lessened instead of being encreased, as I once thought it might be. My success has been greater than I had any right to expect it would be, and I thank you very sincerely for the pleasure you take in it. My admirers, as you flatteringly call them, will probably see me in the course of the season; for I shall certainly be in London at some part of it whatever engagements I may form elsewhere.

"Mrs. Kemble begs you her best compliments.

"I am, my dear Sir,

"Yours truly,

"J. P. Kemble.

"*Cork, Sep.* 4, 1813.

"I received your letter only yesterday—it has been lying at Limerick."

On the 15th of January 1814, after an absence of about two years, he returned to act a limited number of nights. By agreement, he had stipulated to dress in his own room, a matter easily arranged by the affectionate politeness of Mr. Fawcett, then stage manager: among a long list of the profession with whom Mr. Kemble always stood highly, I *know* that the respect and admiration born for him by the gentleman just named has never been exceeded. Mr. Kemble re-appeared in the character of Coriolanus—the pride assumed for the patrician sunk at that moment under the pride of the actor—the whole pit rose simultaneously to welcome him, and while he bent in grateful acknowledgment to the people before him, a cricket of *laurel* fell from the boxes at his feet. This compliment is not *native* to us but adopted from our enthusiastic neighbours of the Continent. If its continuance among us were regulated by a severe committee of taste, so that it might be at all times judiciously

bestowed, I do not know a more elegant compliment. Let us remember, as some consolation to English *coldness* on such occasions, that, if we do not so warmly flatter the living, we treat the dead with infinitely more respect. In Paris, from the palace to the parish church, all minds are in conflict whether an actor shall be buried as a Christian; and the service of the church is supposed to be profaned, if breathed over the chill remains of him, whose powers of elocution have delighted, perhaps instructed, the greatest of their preachers.

I again must revert to what I have often observed—I mean the singularity that attended Mr. Kemble's course as an actor. He was now at the very height of popularity; he drew 600*l.* houses, and might have been expected to wear his honours undisputed to the end of his career. In his absence, Mr. Betty too, had returned, and shown himself a good, but not a great actor:—little differing from his former self, although his mind had received great cultivation in the interval, it became clear that he had been entirely *taught* his *original* lesson; as indeed every man who *would* think upon the subject always knew. Neither his figure nor his countenance had been improved by his manliness. In a word, his performances were greater, but not *better* than they had been, and the *wonderful* had in course departed from his standard. He therefore now combated with equal armes, and was certainly inferior to many champions, whom nobody ever thought of comparing with Mr. Kemble.

But in this period of apparent security, the other theatre had started up from its ashes in all the defiance of property and splendour, and even an actor was produced from a provincial stage, able to *dispute*, at all events, the palm, even with Mr. Kemble, for years. The reader sees that I allude to Mr. Kean. The way was well prepared for this gentleman by his friends in town. The newspapers noticed, with apparent fondness and hope, the approximation of his name to that of *Le Kain*, the great actor of France; and some powerful resemblances were remarked, between the recorded terrors of the one tragedian, and the actual and present powers of the other. He was short, too, like Garrick; had a face, it seemed, of wonderful expression; energy unrivalled; and so great a versatility, that, whether his *Hamlet* or his *Harlequin* were the superior effort, many admirers professed themselves utterly unable to decide. As, however, there seemed no disagreement of *age* between the means and the ends, on which a *wonder* might build itself a temporary residence, one was discovered between his *habits* and his performances, that answered the turn as well. His acting was, therefore, endowed with all the *evidences* of study, and his

life was affirmed to be so careless, as to render study *impossible*. How he did *what* he did, and when and where it had been acquired, became a charm to the witless, which Kean has never, I think, quite dispelled. Well knowing the efficacy of the marvellous, through his whole professional career something of the wonderful has constantly been kept up. It was said at one time, that after the violent exertions of the stage, he delighted to mount his horse, and ride away the night in its inclemency and loneliness: that he would dismount, and take the occasional shelter of a gate-house, and arrive, on the following day, in time to benefit some comrade of his earlier life. Eccentricity was the presiding principle, and his greatness shunned the resemblance to other men. In this strain, with a happy recollection of the first Cæsar, his very relaxations were studiously appropriate. He bore the crest of Gloster in his barge for an heraldic cognizance, and his domestic attendant was a young lion. But hear the great model.

> "Danger knows full well,
> That Cæsar is more dangerous than he.
> We are two lions littered in one day,
> And I the elder and more terrible."

I could wish to be able to review fairly and dispassionately the performances of Mr. Kean, to whom the hearted admirer of Mr. Kemble has paid very particular attention. Something, indeed, of this sort should be done, to relieve a really able man from extravagant eulogy on the one hand, and the most savage depreciation on the other. Let me find a few lines just to hint, that though I think his taste very frequently vicious, and his judgment often imperfect;—though he has almost countless vulgarisms in his pronunciation, and a trick, like Cooke, of speaking with different voices, and uttering the most discordant tones;—yet his energy is so unfailing, as to bear down criticism itself in his rage; and even in the gentler scenes of sorrow, occasional touches of infinite grace and beauty proceed from his imagination. Mr. Kean excited much attention by his Shylock on the 26th of January, 1814; but his Richard the Third acquired immediately, and retains the highest rank in his achievements. When Mr. Kemble had seen him, he said, I remember, "Our styles of acting are so totally different, that you must not expect me to *like* that of Mr. Kean; but one thing I must say in his favour,—he is at all times terribly in *earnest*."

It might have been feared that the retirement of such an actress as Mrs. Siddons would have covered with a long

night a vast proportion of our great female characters. Mediocrity here, like the mediocrity of verse, can only be born by inexperience. In addition to which, it may be observed, that it excites no fondness, it forms no fashion—it is the still water of a season—it is an exhibition without a *soul*—the audience and the treasury are equally cold to it. But although an actress greatly below the standard of Mrs. Siddons, inferior in dignity and power to her *latter* self, and even in pathos greatly exceeded in her *earlier* days, Miss O'Neill displayed in her very first performance of Juliet, on the 6th October 1814, such rare and bewitching talent, as at once placed her at the summit of her art. Her face and person were lovely without being striking, either as to feature or symmetry—she was always genteel, and interesting from the apparent tenderness of her soul. Her attraction was unbounded, and she left only the *regal* woes of tragedy unsustained. The towering grandeur of Lady Macbeth, and the indignant majesty of Katharine and Constance, own no suitable representative but Mrs. Siddons. Let me observe, too, that through the whole range of characters common to both these actresses, the mental intelligence of Mrs. Siddons seemed to be unapproached and unapproachable. Miss O'Neill appeared *equal* to the present occasion, whatever it was; you always conceived the powers of Mrs. Siddons to be *superior*. It was not given Miss O'Neill to astonish, but she never failed to delight. If my deliberate opinion on this subject should experience any dissent, I venture to affirm that it will not be from observation of equal extent. I have seen Mr. Kemble act with his sister and with Miss O'Neill. I know the precise difference that he felt between their talents. I saw their operation upon his own. Perhaps I may not find a fitter place to remember an instance of gentle courtesy, which passed between Mr. Kemble and the lady whom I have just named. Mr. Kemble at times suffered extreme agony from the *gout;* but if the theatre required his aid, and he could in any manner support himself on the stage, he would never keep his room, but with infinite address conceal even his tortures from the audience, and sustain the character with real philosophy. On one of these nights he was acting the *Stranger* to the Mrs. Haller of Miss O'Neill. A friend of mine, on entering the green-room, found him literally groaning with pain; and being called to the opposite side of the stage, he entreated that gentleman to lead him to his station. On his way thither his dramatic consort passed him, and, sustaining the character, addressed him thus—"I am very sorry to see my poor husband in such pain." Tortured as he was, Mr. Kemble replied with equal

preservation of character—"Yes; you are a dear creature, and deserve *forgiveness*."

It is a painful course that awaits me in the few remaining pages of my work; but I am bound to accomplish it, and must find alleviation for the greatest losses in the memory of excellence and the fame which consecrates it. Before I terminate the dramatic career of Mr. Kemble, I am called upon to record the melancholy close of his former friend, Mr. Sheridan. He died on the 7th of July 1816. I am afraid that the brilliant opening of his life fatally deceived him; and that even his *own* genius had not shielded his decline from indigence and embarrassment. A little before he ceased to be, I remember meeting a reverend friend of his and mine, who, with tears in his eyes, unfolded to me what he understood to be the actual condition of that great man. The PROFOUND MORALIST, at the close of his life of Savage, has inculcated the necessity of worldly prudence, in terms which cannot be exceeded for their dignity or their force. I wait, with some anxiety, to see a POET, of infinite sensibility and taste, press the lesson once more upon the heart, in language worthy of the subject and of his own fame.

Mr. Kemble had anticipated his final departure from the stage by a marked farewell to the audience of Edinburgh, on the 29th of March, 1817. On this occasion his friend Sir Walter Scott honoured him with a poetical address, which has the best praise such verse can claim, that of being exact and appropriate. It was spoken and heard with corresponding emotions. The actor returned, after making, for the last time, one of his chief country excursions, to take his departure also from his usual and long favourite residence in the metropolis.

On the 23d of June, 1817, he acted for the last time in the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. He chose the character of Coriolanus, I have no doubt, as much from deference to public opinion as any other motive. Perhaps, in exact strictness, he should have closed, as he began, in Hamlet. The illustrious Roman was never exhibited by this great actor with more complete effect. I had secured myself a seat in the orchestra, and being exactly below him, saw and enjoyed that amazing power, by which the actor is enabled to subdue even his *nerves* to the temporary demand of the scene, and lay *himself* completely aside, to be resumed like a stage revival. I saw nothing that, by a glance or one failing tone, reminded you of the awful LAST.

When the curtain dropt, the audience enthusiastically exclaimed, "No FAREWELL!" They had witnessed an exertion

of almost unbounded power, and therefore saw no reason for its cessation. But it was fitting that Mr. Kemble should thus quit their presence, without a claim upon their indulgence. Whenever the time arrives, it is one under which the greatest fortitude may be expected to feel unnerved, and the language of fiction, as poetry is styled, can alone lessen the pungent suffering of the actor of sensibility. Mr. Kemble was more affected than I had ever beheld him. I shall clear his speech from the easily conceived interruptions, whether proceeding from his own feelings or those of others, and exhibit the whole of it, I believe, literally.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"I have now appeared before you for the last time: this night closes my professional life.

"I am so much agitated that I cannot express with any tolerable propriety what I wish to say. I feared, indeed, that I should not be able to take my leave of you with sufficient fortitude—composure, I mean—and had intended to withdraw myself from before you in silence; but I suffered myself to be persuaded that if it were only from old custom, some little parting word would be expected from me on this occasion. Ladies and Gentlemen, I intreat you to believe, that, whatever abilities I have possessed—either as an actor, in the performance of the characters allotted to me—or as a manager, in endeavouring at a union of propriety and splendour in the representation of our best plays, and particularly of those of the divine Shakspeare; I entreat you to believe that all my labours, all my studies, whatever they have been, have been made delightful to me, by the approbation with which you have been pleased constantly to reward them,

"I beg you, Ladies and Gentlemen, to accept my thanks for the great kindness you have invariably shown me, from the first night I became a candidate for public favour, down to this painful moment of my parting with you!—I must take my leave at once.—Ladies and Gentlemen, I most respectfully bid you a long, and an unwilling farewell!"

In this address Mr. Kemble had remembered the farewell of his *greatest* predecessor.* It seemed built upon it, or, rather, it was what truth and feeling demanded from both, and ALL that they demanded. I observed him narrowly while he was in its progress; he evidently regretted his *art* as much as his patrons; for when he alluded, as he might indeed proudly do, to his efforts for the "divine Shakspeare,"

his voice faltered upon the words, and his tears became visible.

At the close he seemed to summon all his strength, and spoke with hurry, and eagerness to be relieved. He retired with evident emotion, and bowing with graceful and profound respect, till the scene withdrew him from the pursuing gaze of the spectators.

Behind the curtain another trial awaited him; the performers, with whom he had so frequently acted, crowding about him to testify their respect for his talent, and affection to his person. He was soon divested of the little *properties* that last adorned him on the stage. Mr. Matthews took away his *sandals*, and merited the gift.

"Things precious long to fancy and to love."

But the honours of the stage were not to invest Mr. Kemble unaccompanied; a small circle of his admirers proposed to invite him to a farewell dinner, attended with sundry gratifying tokens of their esteem, and the design, as it admitted of great accession, so at last it was found to embrace a vast portion of the rank and talent of the country. A committee was soon formed, and Mr. Kemble appointed Friday, the 27th of June, as the day when he would have the honour of waiting upon his friends.

On the morning of that day, he received a deputation from the performers of Drury Lane Theatre, consisting of Messrs. Rae, Dowton, Johnstone, and Holland. But for Mr. Rae's illness, this would have occurred on the evening of his retirement. There was something about Mr. Rae's address to him, singularly pleasing and characteristic. He said he lamented that Mr. Kemble had withdrawn from the stage, "its *pride* and distinguished ornament." He reminded him proudly, that it was "at *their* theatre he had attained and perfected his high professional character." He justly estimated the *dignity* added by Mr. Kemble to the profession, by his genius in the art itself, and the force of his example in private life." Mr. Kemble was sensibly alive to such commendation, and paid his compliments to the deputation cordially and impressively.

At seven o'clock, dinner was announced in the grand room of the Freemasons' Tavern. Mr. Kemble and the noble president, Lord Holland, were preceded from the drawing-room by the committee, the band playing the march from the occasional overture. Mr. Kemble sat on the right hand of the chairman, and his grace the Duke of Bedford on the left.

Selections from Handel were performed during the dinner by the band, and on the removal of the cloth, the matchless *non nobis* was given in all its thrilling awe by the best singers of it, that I have ever heard, Leete, Nield, Terrail, Master Turle and others.

After the usual toasts, Mr. Rae and Mr. Matthews handed to Lord Holland the cast and drawing of the vase, which was to be presented to Mr. Kemble. His Lordship immediately rose and addressed the company. The praise he bestowed upon the great man who sat beside him, was so much the universal sentiment, that it really needs no particular record; it was full of all his lordship's well known taste and kindness, and was received with infinite applause. Mr. Young then recited an ode, written for the occasion by Mr. Campbell, of which one stanza so utterly distances the rest, that I beg to keep it, like Paulina's statue of Hermione, "*lovely*, apart."

"His was the spell o'er hearts
That only acting lends,
The youngest of the sister arts,
Where all their beauty blends.
For Poetry can ill express
Full many a tone of thought sublime;
And Painting, mute and motionless,
Steals but one partial glance from Time.
But by the mighty actor brought,
Illusion's wedded triumphs come,
Verse ceases to be airy thought,
And Sculpture to be dumb!"

Had the rest been equal to this in *truth* and *neatness*, and he had indulged his muse in a stanza that allowed him more dilation and majesty in the characters of the drama, he had rivalled, if not surpassed his countryman, Dr. Beattie; and this I consider to be very high praise indeed. But, in my estimation of the modern school, I may be allowed some of the natural *recurrences* of age.

Mr. Kemble seems to have been rather chilled and checked by the unavoidable attention to his own praises. He perhaps, with some other persons present, thought of the way in which he had *rushed* from such a hearing in Coriolanus;—but he did the best that could be done in the circumstances:—something of *disclaimer*, something of *pride*, mixed up gracefully with sincere *thanks*; and he saw the "*pleasures of hope*," neatly enough, at the bottom of his glass.

Fawcett made him his *General*, in a warm and affectionate speech—Matthews his dramatic *King*.—Talma spoke, in English, a compliment not ill-turned; and Young expressed

his conviction, that "lasting reputation was only to be obtained at the price which Mr. Kemble had paid for it."

The last toast given was *the ladies*, and a little before 12 o'clock, the noble chairman and his guest rose to depart. As Mr. Kemble passed slowly down the room, the company pressed upon him to grasp his hand:—and, when he retired, they merely drank one bumper to his future health and enjoyment, and immediately quitted the scene of perfectly rational and ennobling hospitality. Such was, I rejoice to say,—

"The grac'd respect that claim'd him to the last."

It was, I imagine, a notion peculiar to Mr. Kemble, that he never could be brought to admit that his cough was asthmatic—however, with the evidence of other friends suffering in a similar way, I made up my own mind, that such was actually the nature of his complaint. After his retirement from the stage he got worse rather than better, from the irritation of the lungs, and was earnestly advised to try the lovely atmosphere of the south of France.

At Toulouse he found a residence such exactly as his health required; and there he remained several seasons. But so much must go to the making up a comfortable abode any where to a foreigner, that at length Mr. Kemble found himself obliged to return to Switzerland. His letter on this subject to his brother will be read with deep interest—it is highly characteristic of his judgment and his temper.

"*From Toulouse, February* 27, 1820.

"Come, Charles, my good fellow, take courage—look your pen and ink boldly in the face, and let one know a little how you are, and what you are about. I am about running away towards Switzerland, I think, presently. Since the death of the Duke de Berri, the violence of party is inflamed to such a degree among our Languedocian hot-heads, that the house is growing rather too warm for spectators merely, indifferent to their selfish squabbles and enmities. What with the political, and what with the religious objections people here have towards one another, there is hardly any such thing as society; or if, by chance, you meet with half a dozen of them any where, you see no ease, no cheerful carelessness; every one stands on his guard, keeps a wary distance. We unfortunate English are liked by no party. The royalists think we might have taken better care of their interests at the restoration, and Buonaparte's friends will never forgive us their emperor's defeat at Waterloo, so that I am thinking of packing up. This

place, however, that is, the climate, has done me great service. I have never had a cough since I have been at Toulouse, neither last winter, nor this, which has been more severe than any they had felt for thirty years; my spitting of blood has, I am willing to persuade myself, entirely ceased; and my fits of the gout have been for this twelve month past so slight, that I make a pish at the sufferance. My intention is, to pass next winter in Italy, thoroughly to confirm these corroborations of health: and then, having done all I can for a crazy constitution, and at the same time gratified a laudable curiosity, I shall return home, well or ill, to pass the rest of my time, as philosophically as I am able, among a few friends and my books. Your youth and activity make you smile, may be, at my visionary tranquil prospects and designs. If I could take my own way, you would see how quietly I should make one step towards my elysium, by disengaging myself from every thing that seems to connect me with the concerns and bustle of business. We cannot live in this place so cheaply as we were told we could. Those who will content themselves to live in dungeons up three or four pair of stairs, and, in short, manage sordidly in every article of food, &c. may contrive not to be at any great expense; but one may live this way and spend but little money any where. By the receipt Mr. Murray has sent me, I find your houses have hitherto been very indifferent this season. Mr. Elliston, I hear, bears down all before him; what are you about to let LA STOCCATA carry it away? I hope, as it happens for ever in theatres, some lucky chance will turn up for us, and that the year will end more successfully than it has hitherto gone on. My wife wrote to Mrs. Charles some time ago; but with our best love to her, tell her that she is as bad a correspondent as I am, who certainly have as little right as any one in the world to complain of another's want of punctuality on this score: yet I do complain of her, for she writes so agreeably that one is out of humour to miss her letters. How do my Lord and Lady Blessington do? Pray remember me to them in the best manner that can be. I see my Lord has been fighting in the house for old Ireland; and I do think it was hard to saddle my friend Pat with restrictions, who had never made one whince to deserve them. To every body to whom you think they will be welcome, make my kind compliments. We send you our love for yourself, Mrs. Kemble, your children, Twiss and all his family, Mrs. Siddons, and Cecilia, if they are in town.

"Thine always, "J. P. KEMBLE.

"*Rue Tolosane, No.* 10.

"For Charles Kemble, Esq."

Mr. Kemble was suddenly recalled to England by the following event:

On Monday, the 2d of October, 1820, Covent Garden Theatre had the misfortune to lose Mr. Thomas Harris, who possessed himself one-half of that property. He died at Wimbledon, in, I think, the 78th year of his age. His death was of the utmost moment to the concern. While he lived, the undisputed management of the theatre being in him, there was a unity and directness in their operations at that house always of infinite moment in a business where obstruction is fatal. At his death this *right* to manage did not descend to his son. The proprietors were all entitled to be consulted, and in a time of difficulty what was to conciliate their opinions? It is so easy to figure to one's self a more favourable result from a difference of system: cheap indeed is the wisdom of *fancy*.

Had such an event occurred earlier in Mr. Kemble's life, and the full objects of the plan for the new theatre been realized, he might have considered the *entire property* to be a desirable possession; and, though hardly on the conditions of the *memorandum* of which I have already spoken, he might by the other proprietors have been allowed to purchase the whole. But, in a state of health that rendered his superintendance impossible; seeing the theatre heavily embarrassed amidst its greatest success; and little prospect of a speedy termination to the difficulties before them;—he made up his mind, at once, to divest himself of his personal interest; and, accordingly, in the month of November, assigned over his SIXTH of it to his brother Charles. As soon as this, and some few other matters of moment, were off his mind, he immediately returned to Lausanne.

When Mr. Kemble left London, his friendly solicitor, Mr. Murray, became the occupant of his elegant house in Great Russel-street; and the only pecuniary objects of much moment to him were his collection of old plays, and his general library, with which it would be idle to encumber a sojourner in a foreign land. As to the first of these, Mr. Evans strongly dissuaded him from a public sale; the very collection, formed with so much skill, must be unmade, and reduced to single plays; and as to any object of lasting reference, the motive of its indefatigable collector, the work, if ever to be done, must be absolutely begun again; and from the rising value of many rare plays among us, perhaps would defy the largest fortune to complete it. The great object, therefore, was to place this unrivalled monument of our drama in the library of some distinguished nobleman;—and Mr. Kemble,

through his friends, Messrs. Payne and Foss, at length transferred the complete collection of his plays and play-bills to his Grace the Duke of Devonshire, for the sum of 2000*l.* Mr. Kemble had offered them originally for an annuity of 200*l.* upon his own life. His kind friends here, with a very rational presentiment, thought such an arrangement improvident and quite inadequate. At first they proposed to join Mrs. Kemble's life in the annuity with that of her husband—to this, however, there was some objection—but the illustrious purchaser made every sacrifice that could be expected—he cancelled the original proposal, by paying down the sum of TWO THOUSAND pounds.

I am fortunately enabled, by the kindness of Messrs. Payne and Foss, to show how Mr. Kemble felt upon this interference for his interest; and how steadily he had determined to fulfil his first proposal to the Duke. His letters to those gentlemen do him infinite honour. But it was proper that such should be the feeling of any party, who was to be mixed up in a transaction with the Duke of DEVONSHIRE. I presume his Grace will convert the possession into an heir-loom, so as to take security against the possibility of dispersion. The utility of such a treasure is in its *integrity*.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I last night received a letter from Mr. Murray, informing me that you had concluded with the Duke of Devonshire for the purchase of my quarto plays for an annuity of two hundred pounds during my life.

"Mr. Murray tells me that he has, for the present, declined the putting of this agreement into execution, because he does not think it would be sufficiently advantageous to me, unless Mrs. Kemble's life, at least, is included in the annuity. I am extremely obliged by Mr. Murray's kind concern for me on this occasion:—but no consideration whatever can make me recede in the slightest point from the proposal I originally empowered you to make to his Grace on my behalf. I have written to Mr. Murray, by this post, to the same effect; and have desired him to ratify the sale and purchase, in due form, according to my own original voluntary offer. If, however, before this letter reaches you, it shall have been judged reasonable by the Duke's agent that Mrs. Kemble's life be included in the annuity, which Mr. Murray seems to think not an impossibility, in that case, I have told him that I am not so stern a moralist as to require a concession so agreeable to me to be expunged. This, however, is an addi-

upon which I have no right whatever to expect; and I abide simply by my terms of the annuity for my own life only.

"If this interruption to the sale of my plays has given you, as I fear it may, any unnecessary trouble, I assure you I shall regret it very much; for I place no judgment in competition with yours as to the value of the books, and am thoroughly convinced that you have, as much as possible, my interest at heart in the disposing of them.

"Pray remember me in the warmest manner to Mr. Foss. Indeed, I address this letter to you both, and wishing both of you many happy and happier new years, I remain, my dear Sir, your obliged and faithful servant,

(Signed) "J. P. KEMBLE.

"Maison Zimmer, Lausanne, Dec. 31st, 1820."

"When you do me the favour of writing to me, pray put (*via Paris*) in the corner of your direction; otherwise, they tell me here, your letter will run the risk of making the tour of Germany before it reaches me.

"Messrs. Payne and Foss, Pall Mall, London, (*via Paris.*)"

"For Mr. PAYNE, Bookseller, Pall Mall.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Mr. Murray tells me in a letter I have this day received from him, that the Duke of Devonshire is willing to give 2,000*l.* for my quarto plays, instead of the annuity, to which Mr. Murray demurred. I am extremely well pleased with this agreement, and have desired Mr. Murray to conclude it in proper form, that the books may be delivered to the Duke immediately. In moving the plays, bid your people be careful not to let any loose leaves drop out, for there are a few that want to be gummed in, and, if their place should be lost, it might be a troublesome job to find it again.

"I have assured Mr. Murray, and I repeat to you, that without the Duke's complete approbation of this new agreement, I should have considered myself bound by all the ties of integrity to abide by my original proposal.

"The post is on the point of setting off, and only gives me time to assure you and Mr. Foss that I shall always be your very much obliged and faithful servant,

"J. P. KEMBLE.

"Jan. 2d, 1821.
Maison Zimmer, Lausanne."

His very well chosen miscellaneous collection of books sold

extremely well. It was not very numerous; but so many persons were found desirous of obtaining some relic from his library, that it produced, under the hammer of the judicious Evans, the sum of 2271*l.* 15*s.*—His prints, chiefly theatrical, 303*l.* 6*s.*

The house of Mr. Kemble, at Lausanne, has been described to me as well entitled to its name, *beau site.* He here enjoyed, in the greatest comfort, a romantic situation and a refined society. His garden formed his principal amusement: he rose early and delighted himself in the cultivation of the sweets around him. His day usually began by reading a chapter in the Protestant version of the Bible, and was continued by his usual studious habits, or rides in his neighbourhood, and the receiving and returning the visits of persons of the first consequence at Lausanne.

His visit to Italy took place only a few months before his decease. The impression of it was exactly such as my knowledge of him anticipated. He was not at all to be numbered in the list of curious travellers. Nothing was more usual with him, than to remark that *romantic* tendency in others, to convert very ordinary appearances into the wonderful. Venice, however, excited his particular attention; and he appeared to consider that singular city as the object of rational admiration. At Rome I know that he saw every thing, that can either tempt or gratify the curiosity of the traveller. A considerable number of illustrious English were in that capital during Mr. Kemble's residence there; and in the society of Lady Charleville and her party, his visits to either its ancient or modern wonders were duly paid. But nothing could, in the mind of this good, humane man, compensate for the squalid debasement of the people. To use his own expression, it absolutely "made him *wretched*," and he was glad to be rid of a spectacle so repugnant to his ideas of the just demands of man upon government. Mrs. Kemble had still less disposition to the excursive than her husband, and but seldom could be prevailed upon to stir from her apartment. At Rome, however, Mr. Kemble's health became visibly impaired, and Dr. Clarke ordered his immediate return to Lausanne. It was with difficulty that he endured the journey. Home had at first its usual effect upon such natures as his. No man ever more sincerely loved or more adorned *home* than Mr. Kemble. He appeared revived now, and perfectly happy. His friends conceived him to be rapidly recovering from the ill effects of his late tour;—but they were deceived. I am not competent to write upon the tendency of the human economy to particular disorders; I know nothing of their

causes, little of their palliatives; yet my notion for many years had been, that my friend would expire in the manner that he did.

I use the very accurate detail of his last days, which was transmitted from Lausanne on the best authority; reserving myself for a few remarks at the close on the most important subject—I mean his religious opinions.

On Wednesday the 19th of February, Mr. Kemble dined at the house of an acquaintance in the neighbourhood, and was observed to be in extremely good spirits; a few friends drank tea with him on the following evening, when he played his rubber (to which he was very partial), and appeared in excellent health. On the Sunday after this day, Mr. Kemble walked for two hours in the sunshine of his garden, and no sign of illness was remarked. He arose on Monday morning as well as usual, and conversed with Mrs. Kemble on different matters; when, according to his usual custom, he read a chapter in his Bible. He again joined Mrs. Kemble in the breakfast-room, and said to her, "Don't be alarmed, my dear, I have had a slight attack of apoplexy." Mrs. Kemble was naturally very much terrified, and assisted him to his chair, and when seated, he took up a number of *Galignani's Messenger;* but becoming worse, his friend and physician, Dr. Schole, was sent for, who arrived in a short time, and found him in the position already described, but altered, and exhibiting very unfavourable symptoms. His left side had suffered a decided attack, and he could with difficulty articulate; but seemed extremely anxious to spare the feelings of Mrs. Kemble. Dr. Schole, with the assistance of his old attached servant George, helped him to his bed, and, in the act of conducting him thither, a second attack took place, so suddenly, that his clothes were obliged to be cut asunder, in order that he might the more speedily be let blood. But nature was fast exhausting; and one attack succeeded another so rapidly, that Mr. Kemble never spoke afterwards, though he seemed perfectly sensible at intervals. Until nine o'clock on Wednesday morning, the 20th of February, 1823, he lingered in this speechless state, when he expired without any apparent suffering. Thus died this amiable and intellectual man, full of years and honour, in a distant land.

The funeral took place on Saturday the 1st of March, in a piece of ground adjoining the *cimetiere*, on the Berne road, procured under the direction of Mrs. Kemble. Mr. Capel and several English are there interred. The Dean of Raphoe, who had lately returned to Lausanne, read the funeral service at the house of Mr. Kemble; and Mr. Cheesebrough,

the resident clergyman, who had read prayers to Mr. Kemble when he could attend to them, and was with him when he died, performed the melancholy ceremony at the grave. The age of sixty-six was recorded on the coffin. The death of Mr. Kemble was sincerely felt by all persons at Lausanne, and his remains were followed to the grave by all the resident English, and by many of the Swiss. The English, indeed, had no parties during the week; and one foreign lady of fashion put off a splendid assembly on account of Mr. Kemble's decease.

The following is a copy of a letter from the English clergyman resident at Lausanne to a professional gentleman, in London, which is interesting, inasmuch as it is in itself very amiable, and as it shows the serenity and virtue of Mr. Kemble's domestic life, and confirms the religious peace of his death :—

"Sir, *Lausanne, Feb.* 26, 1823.

"It is with deep regret that I announce to you an afflicting and sudden event, the decease of Mr. Kemble, who breathed his last at a quarter past nine o'clock this morning. He had been seized with an apoplectic attack about forty-eight hours before his death; and though it was not of any very alarming nature at first, yet it was no less fatal, and he gradually declined, till, without a single sigh or groan, his soul, released from its earthly tenement, returned to Him who gave it.

"During a week or more prior to this attack, his health seemed more satisfactory than for months before, so that poor Mrs. Kemble was very ill provided for so unexpected a blow, and consequently has been in such a distressed state as I cannot pretend to describe. She is, indeed, much indisposed at present, from the effects of a violent nervous attack, which seized her when all our fears of her husband were confirmed; but in a little time I have no doubt but a sense of her religious duties, in addition to her excellent understanding, will conduce to her amendment and resignation. To you, Sir, no comments on this excellent man's character here are necessary. I will only say, that he was universally beloved by both his countrymen and natives, and that I am deprived of, in my little flock, a most pious and worthy member—but God's will be done! We are naturally grieved at the loss of what was ever amiable, excellent, and of good report, as a standing example to all around; but how great, on reflection, should be our joy, that the feeble praise of man is succeeded by the immortal honour and approving smile of the best and greatest of all beings! I was with him during the greater part

of his last hours, and at the final close; and on commending his soul to *his* gracious keeping, whose blood and mediatorial power could alone present it spotless before God, I could not avoid secretly exclaiming, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his.'

"It is by Mrs. Kemble's desire that I write to you, who with her kindest regards, begs you will take upon you as early as possible, the painful task of communicating it to Miss Siddons, and gradually to prepare Mrs. Siddons for such an afflicting stroke, in order that she may not first learn it from any other quarter. Mrs. Kemble's poignancy is increased, on considering what will be the agonizing feelings of Mrs. Siddons, but calculates much on your kind attention herein. I have written to Mr. Charles Kemble by this post. I beg my respectful compliments to Mrs. Siddons; and having now hastily fulfilled my truly painful duty,

"I have the honour to remain, &c. &c."

The attendance of a Protestant minister upon Mr. Kemble, who styles him "a pious and worthy member of his little flock"—requires some slight elucidation; inasmuch as Mr. Kemble had been bred a Catholic. On this subject he thought assuredly for himself. He avoided the indecency of disclaiming the *mode* of religion followed by his father; and looked only to its *vital* character. If the most enlarged charity towards ALL men be *foolishness* to the Catholic, I then, from his repeated declarations, pronounce Mr. Kemble to have been a Protestant. But bigotry of any kind was his utter abhorrence; and he easily reconciled, at least to his *own* satisfaction, all those discordant ceremonials and notions, which keep human creatures, though Christians, still estranged from each other.

While I was proceeding in my work, now so speedily at an end, I received a letter from a servant, who had lived twenty years with Mr. Kemble, and served him ably and affectionately. It has been said, "that no man seems a HERO to his valet." He may, notwithstanding, appear something a vast deal *better*. Let me obtain a minute's attention to the request of JOHN ROUSHAM; and I must give it faithfully in his own words.

"As I understand you are writing the life of my poor master, I request, sir, that you will notice his *princely conduct* to me. I lived with him twenty years, his faithful servant; so he called me, and treated me more like a brother than a

domestic; for he indulged me in every thing that was proper, and so did Mrs. Kemble. They were the kindest master and mistress that ever lived to me, and to all their other servants. When I left him he gave me TWO HUNDRED POUNDS, to help to set me up in business. He was the best and most generous of masters, and if you will insert this much of him for ME, you will ever oblige,

"Sir, your most obedient and
"Very thankful servant."

Yes; the swelling gratitude of a worthy, though humble man, shall find here a record; and occupy the place of a vain and ostentatious eulogium!

CONCLUSION.

As these pages were drawing to a close, after a day of rather severe application, I took down my Tacitus, to delight myself with the noblest biography that was ever written—his life of Agricola. Its result upon my mind the reader shall have with entire sincerity; for I would not conceal from him the imperfection of my judgment, after it has been corrected. I had often indulged a hope, that the latter days of Mr. Kemble would have been passed here among us in affluence and honour! that a theatre under his direction might have extended and perpetuated a sound taste in our amusements! that while he lived, he might have lived for Shakspeare; and that in his last moments the folio of that divine poet might have supported his head, until all memory of his great master was gone!

But his own desires, as they were more moderate, had also more wisdom: and, looking to his life, however natural it may be for the fancy to form such a picture, yet upon mature reflection I entirely acquiesce in the "decline and fall" of the great ROMAN ACTOR. The truth is, that enough had been sacrificed to noise and show—to the shouts of the multitude, and the yet more agreeable flattery of friendship. The actor had been satiated with applause—the man required some interval, previous to the *greatest* change he had to endure, that he might quite dismiss the "fierce vanities" of the past from his mind, and possess his soul in privacy and in peace.

But the ruling passion made one last effort, and disturbed the tranquillity of his retirement. The mind of Mr. Kemble had a lofty pitch; it could change the kind of its indulgence,

without lowering its character. His concluding ambition was to tread the soil, which his Coriolanus, his Brutus, and his Cato had trodden, and "trace with a stately step the ruins of the capitol." He therefore visited Rome, which, by a religious, in succession to a military despotism, is still the mistress of the word, the ETERNAL CITY. But the air of that capital was found unfavourable; by the advice of the faculty he returned to Lausanne; and all immediate danger seemed to have passed away. He resumed the placid and endearing course of his domestic life--his regular habits and temperate enjoyments. The scenery of Lausanne is peculiarly striking—the beautiful is around, the sublime is in the distance. The powerful features of nature elevate the conception to the GREATEST of all Beings and the BEST. Piety in Mr. Kemble was a lowly and unpresuming virtue—you gathered it from what he did *not* rather than what you saw him do. He reverentially abstained from idle use of the sacred name at all times, and indulged his truly rational devotion without dogmatism and with general charity.

In the tenour of this "noiseless course" a sudden check comes upon the system; a few hours of struggle elapse; and he is no more. But fondness for his faithful friend, his monitress, his gentle guide, was the predominant feeling in his breast, and the accents of solicitude as to Mrs. Kemble were the last that faltered from his tongue. What close of life could raise him higher in our estimation than this? what condition form a better termination to a life of hurry and ambition? He had wisely, as well as kindly, given to his brother his share in the theatre;--fully aware of all the difficulties surrounding such property, he had conferred it upon a "younger strength," in the hope, that zeal and industry might realize it into wealth; and that his dear Charles would thus owe every thing in this life, but existence, to himself. He died, fortunately I say for him, at a time, when such a hope might be entertained; and before a strife, equally mischievous and unnecessary, had thrown the whole property into Chancery, and by every indulgence of forensic skill, by all the missiles of bill and cross-bill, demurrer and amendment, impeded for months the business of the concern, and exercised the patience of the clearest and most indulgent mind that ever presided in that court.

Mr. Kemble, as to his person, might be said to be majestic by effort rather than habit--he could become so in a moment. His ordinary gait was careless, his look rather kind than penetrating. He did not, except professionally, strive to be considered the noble creature that he was. Perhaps the dis-

crimination of Tacitus as to the appearance of Agricola, was more than slightly characteristic of Kemble. "He was of that make and stature, which may be said to be graceful, not majestic. His countenance had not that commanding air which strikes with awe: a sweetness of expression was the prevailing character. You would have been easily convinced that he was a good man, and you would have been willing to believe him a great one."* I have sufficiently, I hope, guarded this application, to Mr. Kemble in *private* life. On the stage, he burst upon you with a dignity, unseen but in *his* person and gesture; and embodied all that imagination, perhaps *alone*, has suggested of ancient manners.

The great author, whom I have just quoted, thus proceeds —"I do not mean to censure the custom of preserving in brass or marble the shape and stature of eminent men; but busts and statues, like their originals, are frail and perishable. The soul is formed of finer elements, and its inward form is not to be expressed by the hand of an artist with unconscious matter." The mind, which informed the expression of Mr. Kemble, may be *truly* conceived from a countenance as variable as the entire circle of the passions—the efforts of modern art too acquire a new though humbler life by the fidelity of the graver. Even in this respect Mr. Kemble was highly fortunate. The skilful admiration of his friend Sir Thomas Lawrence has fixed upon the canvass the melancholy wisdom of his Hamlet, the lofty confidence of his Coriolanus, the intrepid ardour of his Rolla, the awful rumination of his Cato. And many a portrait of the private gentleman, and the scholar, adorn the apartments of his particular friends. From such materials statuary should compose a noble work, that may place him for centuries among the illustrious of our country. Thus, as to our Kemble, we can strengthen the feeble record of tradition, and he need not shrink from the award of time. Distant ages may estimate the mental and personal graces that adorned him. For ever the objects of an easy reference, his perfect figure and noble countenance may arrest the arts themselves in their debasement, and genius become ashamed of perpetuating vulgar features and forms devoid of character and meaning.

Enough in these volumes has been detailed, to afford the reader a correct idea of the actor and the man. I have shown him, as he would wish *professionally* to be seen, by the side of kindred merit; and, in *private* life, as his character ap-

* Decentior quam sublimior fuit; nihil metûs in vultu: gratia oris supererat. Bonum virum facilè crederes, magnum libenter.—Vit. Agric. Sec. 44.

peared to one who really loved him. I have thus endeavoured to repay some of the benefits, which I derived from his friendship; and vanity may hope to have extended the fame of a man of genuine worth, and an actor of first-rate excellence. What is beyond this object, I consider, as filling up a group of which HE is the principal figure—as combining an action in which HIS interest was progressive and important. —But though I may flatter myself, that I reflect no unfaithful image of the stage itself during his life; yet to exhibit KEMBLE was the grand inducement to my task: how far my wishes may have been seconded by my powers, I must leave to the decision of judgment and candour. I look at the page of Cowper with delight, and admire the solemn propriety with which he has closed *his* task. But although in a work, however slight, I should be ashamed to write without a MORAL purpose, yet on the present occasion I DARE pretend only to the amusement of the PUBLIC.

> "Yes; all is in their hands whose praise I seek;
> Whose frown can disappoint the *proudest* strain,
> Whose approbation prosper *even* MINE."

ILLUSTRATIONS

REFERRED TO IN THE INTRODUCTION.

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT *indented, had, made, concluded, and fully agreed upon, this seventh day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six, between* SPRANGER BARRY, *of Norfolk Street, in the Strand, in the County of Middlesex, Esquire, of the one part, and* THOMAS RYDER, *of the City of Dublin, in the Kingdom of Ireland, Esquire, (by Tottenham Heaphy, late of the City of Dublin, but now of the City of London, aforesaid, Esquire, his Attorney, thereunto lawfully authorized, as after mentioned,) of the other part.*

WHEREAS, by a certain power of attorney, bearing date the twenty-second day of April now last past, after reciting that an agreement had been entered into between the said Spranger Barry and the said Thomas Ryder, for demising to the said Thomas Ryder the Theatre in Crow Street, with the materials and appurtenances thereunto belonging, for the term of seven years from the first day of May, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six, at the yearly rent of FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY pounds sterling, secured to him by bonds with warrants of attorney, exclusive of ground rent, taxes, and the interest of subscribers' tickets, to be paid at such times as after mentioned; for the completing of which agreement and the perfecting of the bonds, he the said Thomas Ryder did thereby appoint the said Tottenham Heaphy his true and lawful attorney, for him, and in his name, to affix his seal and sign his name, and as his act and deed to deliver bonds with warrants of attorney to the said Spranger Barry, for the payment of the sum of four hundred and fifty pounds yearly, for the space of seven years from the first day of May aforesaid: And also bonds for all ground rents (to be ascertained by his attorney) of the said Theatre, with the amount of taxes and subscribers' interest included in said bonds. And as the gross amount of the said ground rents, taxes, and subscribers' interest was not sufficiently known to him, he did also empower his said attorney to fix the same with said Spranger Barry, and execute bonds conformable thereto, agreeable to the said power of attorney. And lest the powers thereby given should not appear to his said attorney to be sufficient for concluding the said recited agreement

with said Spranger Barry, he did thereby agree that the said powers and authorities therein given to him should be extended or limited, altered or enlarged, as to his said attorney should appear expedient, thereby confirming what he should do as if particularly expressed in the said letter of attorney: And then reciting that the sum of ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY pounds was payable by government for four plays within the year, and which sum the said Spranger Barry had required should be made over to him by the said Thomas Ryder in discharge of so much of the said recited rent as the same should amount unto: he did thereby empower said Tottenham Heaphy to execute and perfect such assignment thereof as far as he himself was enabled to do for such time as he should be entitled thereto; and after impowering him to do other acts, he did thereby ratify and confirm all and whatsoever his said attorney should do or cause to be done in the premises as in and by the said letter or power of attorney, reference being thereunto had, will more fully appear. And whereas said Tottenham Heaphy hath in virtue and in execution of the said power of attorney entered into treaty with the said Spranger Barry, for and on behalf of the said Thomas Ryder, for a lease of the said Theatre or Play-house, and other the premises thereunto belonging, for the term of seven years, at and for the yearly rent of EIGHT HUNDRED AND THREE pounds of lawful money of Ireland, free and clear from all manner of taxes and deductions whatsoever (other than and except the yearly *ground rent* of ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-EIGHT pounds and ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE pounds, making together the sum of THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE pounds, which being deducted out of the said yearly rent of eight hundred and three pounds, reduces the same to the sum of FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY pounds, to be payable to the said Spranger Barry, as his *clear rent* for the said Theatre during the said term) and which said yearly rent of eight hundred and three pounds is to become payable, and the said premises are to be held and enjoyed. And the said Spranger Barry is to grant a lease thereof, and the said Thomas Ryder to execute a counterpart of such lease, in such manner as is hereinafter particularly mentioned, and expressed of and concerning the same respectively. Now THESE PRESENTS WITNESS, and the said Spranger Barry, in consideration of the payment of the said yearly rent of eight hundred and three pounds of lawful money of Ireland, at the days and times, and in such manner as is hereinafter mentioned, and of the performances of all and every the clauses, covenants, and agreements which on the part and behalf of the said Thomas Ryder, his executors or administrators, are, or ought to be kept, done, and performed, doth hereby for himself, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, covenant, promise, and agree to and with the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, and assigns, that he the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns,

or some of them, shall and will, at the proper costs and charges in the law of the said Thomas Ryder, his executors or administrators, on or before the twenty-fourth day of June now next ensuing the date of these presents, or when thereunto required, execute, or cause to be executed, a good and sufficient Indenture of Lease in the law, whereby he the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, executors, or administrators, or some of them, shall and will grant, demise, lease, set, and to farm let unto the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, and assigns, all that the aforesaid Theatre or Play-house, situate, standing, and being in Crow Street, in the City of Dublin aforesaid, with full power and lawful and absolute authority for him the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, and assigns, to perform and act, and cause to be performed and acted, all and all manner of warrantable and lawful plays, operas, pantomimes, interludes, and concerts of music, and all other lawful and theatrical and musical entertainments whatsoever, for his and their own proper use and benefit. And also all his the said Spranger Barry's right and title to perform and act all theatrical and musical entertainments in the said theatre, according to the letters patent granted for the licensing the said Building or Play-house as a Theatre Royal, and to enable the proprietors thereof to perform and act all theatrical and musical entertainments therein, and the produce and profits arising and accruing to him the said Spranger Barry therefrom. And also all the furniture, and all and every the scenes, machines, goods, and chattels thereupon and therein hanging, standing, and being, and thereunto belonging, and which shall be particularly mentioned, specified, described, and contained in an inventory or schedule thereof, to be made and taken thereof and annexed to the said indented Lease, duplicates whereof have been signed this day by the said Spranger Barry and Tottenham Heaphy. And all outhouses, buildings, edifices, cellars, sollars, chambers, rooms, galleries, boxes, seats, forms, ways, passages, doors, and entrances, waters, water courses, lights, casements, profits, liberties, privileges, commodities, advantages, emoluments, hereditaments, and appurtenances whatsoever, to the said Theatre or Play-house, and other the premises thereby to be demised, or any part thereof belonging, or in any wise appertaining to or with the same, or any part or parcel thereof, held, used, occupied, possessed, or enjoyed, or accepted, reputed, taken, or known, as part, parcel, or member thereof, (except and always out of the said Indenture of Lease to be reversed unto the said Spranger Barry, his heirs and assigns, the two messuages or dwelling-houses: And also his new wardrobe to the said Theatre or Play-house belonging: And also all the waste ground thereunto belonging, situate, lying, and being in the Crow Street, in the City of Dublin aforesaid:) To Hold unto the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, and assigns, from the first day of May instant, for and

during, and unto the full end and term of seven years from thence next ensuing, and fully to be complete and ended, at and under the several yearly rents or sums hereinafter mentioned (that is to say,) the yearly rent or sum of four hundred and fifty pounds of lawful money of Ireland, payable to the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, executors, administrators, or assigns, on the first day of November, the first day of December, the first day of January, the first day of February, the first day of March, the first day of April, and the first day of May, in every year, by equal portions, during the said term of seven years, the first payment thereof to begin and to be made on the first day of November now next ensuing: And the yearly rent or sum of one hundred and eighty-eight pounds of like lawful money, being the ground-rent for the said premises, and the same to be paid at the days and times, and in such manner as the same becomes payable by virtue of the original lease thereof: And also the further yearly sum of one hundred and sixty-five pounds to the subscribers to the said Theatre, and the same to be paid and payable according to their several and respective rights and interests therein: And which said yearly rents of four hundred and fifty pounds, one hundred and eighty pounds, and one hundred and sixty-five pounds, make together the annual rent of eight hundred and three pounds: And in which said intended Lease, proper covenants shall be inserted on the part of the said Thomas Ryder, his heirs, executors, and admininistrators, for payment of the said several and respective rents, or annual payments, at the times and in the manner as the same respectively become due and payable: And also that the said Thomas Ryder, his heirs, executors, and administrators, shall and will save harmless, lossless, and indemnified, the said Spranger Barry, his executors and administrators, and his and their goods and chattels, of and from the payment of the said two several rents or annual sums of one hundred and eighty-eight pounds, and one hundred and sixty-five pounds, payable as aforesaid: And also a proviso, that in case the said yearly rent or sum of eight hundred and three pounds, or the said several yearly rents of four hundred and fifty-pounds, one hundred and eighty-eight pounds, and one hundred and sixty-five pounds, making together the said sum of eight hundred and three pounds, or any of them, or any part or parts thereof respectively, shall be behind and unpaid by the space of twenty days, next over or after the days or times whereon the same respectively are payable as aforesaid, it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, or assigns, or any of them, into all and singular the premises thereby to be demised, or any part thereof, in the name of the whole, to re-enter, and the same and every part thereof to have again, re-possess, and re-enjoy, as in his former estate, any thing therein to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding: And that he the said Thomas Ryder, shall and will execute a counterpart of the said Indenture of Lease so to

be made to him of the said premises as aforesaid: And further, that the said Thomas Ryder, his heirs, executors, and administrators, shall thereby also covenant, at his and their own costs, charges, and expenses, to repair, uphold, maintain, scour, clean, paint, amend, and keep the said building, theatre, or play-house, and furniture, scenes, machines, goods, and chattels, and all and singular other premises to be hereby agreed to be demised by the said Indenture of Lease, in good, sufficient, and necessary order and repair, during the said term of seven years, when and so often as need or occasion shall be or require (the main walls and timber of the said building, called the Theatre or Play-house only excepted.) And the same so well and sufficiently repaired at the end or expiration of the said term, peaceably and quietly to yield and deliver up to the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, or assigns. And that he or they, or some of them, shall and will pay, discharge, and satisfy all and all manner of taxes, charges, rates, assessments, or impositions whatsoever, which shall, during the said term, be taxed, rated, assessed, or imposed upon the said premises, or upon the owner or occupant thereof, for or in respect thereof: And that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, or assigns, and his and their servants, agents, or workmen, and others in his or their company, twice or oftener in every year of the said term, in the day time, to come in and upon the said premises thereby to be demised, to view, search, and see the state and condition of the same; and of the decays and wants of reparation give or leave notice in writing upon the said premises, for the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, or assigns, to repair or amend the same within one month from the time of such notice, within which time the said Thomas Ryder shall and will repair and amend the same: And that the said Thomas Ryder shall not, at any time or times, during the said term, perform or act, or cause to be performed and acted, any theatrical or musical entertainment, at or within any other place than within the said theatre or play-house: And also the said Thomas Ryder shall and will, for the further and better securing the payment of the said yearly rent or sum of eight hundred and three pounds, in manner aforesaid, upon the execution of the said Indenture of Lease, enter into and execute one bond or obligation to the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, and assigns, in the penalty of ten thousand pounds, for payment of the said yearly rent or sum of eight hundred and three pounds, or the said several and respective yearly rents of one hundred and sixty-five pounds, one hundred and eighty-eight pounds, and four hundred and fifty pounds, which composes the same as aforesaid, according to the reservation to be contained in the said Indenture of Lease for payment thereof; and shall and will execute a warrant of attorney, authorizing and impowering any attorney of His Majesty's Court of King's Bench, in Ireland, to confess judgment for him, at the suit of the

said Spranger Barry, for the said sum of ten thousand pounds, so to be contained in the said bond as aforesaid, besides costs of suit: And further that he the said Thomas Ryder shall and will assign, or otherwise well and sufficiently authorize and impower the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, and every of them, during the said term, to receive of and from government, or the person or persons authorized to pay the same, the annual sum of one hundred and twenty pounds, which is payable to the proprietors or managers of the said theatre or play-house, for the acting and performing four plays yearly therein, at and by his Majesty's command, as part of the said yearly rent or rents to be reserved in the said Lease: And the said Spranger Barry doth by these presents, for himself, his heirs, and assigns, further covenant, promise, grant, and agree, that he will, by the said Indenture of Lease, covenant that the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, and assigns, paying the said yearly rent or sum of eight hundred and three pounds, or the several yearly rents composing the same, as aforesaid, according to the reservation thereby to be made for payment thereof, and performing, fulfilling and keeping all and singular the covenants, conditions, and agreements therein to be contained, and which on his and their part and behalf are or ought to be paid, done and performed, shall and may peaceably and quietly have, hold, use, occupy, possess, and enjoy the said premises to be thereby demised, without the lawful let, suit, trouble, denial, eviction, molestation, or interruption of or by him, his heirs or assigns, or of or by any person or persons lawfully claiming or to claim from, by, or under him, them, or any of them. In Witness whereof the said Spranger Barry hath, by himself, hereunto set his hand and seal; and the said Thomas Ryder, by his said attorney, authorized as herein-before mentioned, hath hereunto likewise set his hand and seal, the day and year first above written.

Sealed and delivered by the said Spranger Barry, and by the said Tottenham Heaphy, as the act and deed of the said Thomas Ryder (being first duly stampt) in the presence of us,

SPRANGER BARRY,
THOMAS RYDER,
BY
TOTTENHAM HEAPHY,
HIS ATTORNEY.

INVENTORY *of the Scenes, Properties, Grates, Locks, &c. belonging to the Theatre Royal, in Crow Street. Taken by* THOMAS CARMICHAEL *and* JOHN WEST.—*June* 1, 1776.

Box Room.

A moving grate.
Three branches.
Two girandoles, bought from Cranfield.
Eight lamps, leading to the lattices, with burners.
Fifteen latches, with brass falls to the lattices and boxes; one out of repair.
Three locks to three front boxes, one key to open them.
Two locks leading from the box room to each lattice, with one key to open them.
Three globes, two without the box-room, one within; cracked one.
Two forms in the box-room.
An iron lock in Mr Cullen's office in the box-room.
A stock lock and key in the box woman's office.
Two iron bolts to the two outside doors of the box-room.
A stock lock and key to the door going from the box-room to the stage.
Two new grates in the two rooms next the stage door.
One stock lock on West's room.
One stock lock on the outside stage door, and iron latch.
One stock lock on the inside stage door and two iron bolts.
A new press in the music room.
Two old iron grates in the music room; one form, no door to the music room.
One lock on the barber's room, no grates, one old form.
One grate in the store room next the barber's.
An old dressing table in do. without drawers.
An old fixed dressing table in do.
Three locks with keys to O. P. slips.
One stock lock to carpenter's gallery.

Dressing Rooms, No. 12.

One table, an iron grate, a stock lock on the door.

No. 13.

A table, a stock lock, and grate.

Green Room.

A large looking glass, cracked at the corner, and the bordering broken in several places.

Five small glasses, one of them cracked, and four of them out of order.
A large lamp with the burner.
A grate, setting out of order.
One table, stretching rail broke.
One large settee.

No. 1.

One table with drawer, four stuffed chairs, two of them with castors.
A grate and two check window curtains.
A stock lock and key.

No. 2.

An old grate, a table without draws, a stock lock and thumb latch.

No. 3.

A stock lock and key.
A grate, a fixed table without drawers.

No. 4.

A grate setting very bad, a fixed table without drawers, a stock lock and key.

No. 5.

A lock and key, a grate, an old table out of order, with two drawers, the frame of an old trick table.

No. 6.

A grate only.

No. 7.

A grate.
A stock lock and key.
A frame of a table, and a very old table.
Three locks and keys to the slips, P. S.

Taylor's Room, No. 8.

A stock lock and key.

Woman's Wardrobe, No. 9.

A grate.
A lock and key to the property room.
A lock and key to the prompter's office.
Eleven curtains to the boxes and lattices.

Sixteen branches, round boxes and lattices.
A lock and key to the outside pit-door next Ryan's.
A lock and key on the pit-door next Hodgin's office, with falling handles.
Iron spikes round the orchestra, two of them wanting.
Two pieces of iron scrowl work, from the boxos to the stage.
Two small pieces of circular iron spikes from the scrowl work to the pilasters.
Nine tin sockets in the orchestra.
A wooden bar, on the pit-door next Mr. Lord's.

June 3, 1776, *continued.*

STAGE.

Stage table, one form broke.
Three bells under the stage.
Thunder bell, alarm bell, large bell, and curtain bell.
Two tin shades, to shade light of the boxes.
Two step ladders, for the use of the stage.
One long ladder for the use of the carpenter's gallery.
One large wooden branch, hung but out of repair.
Two stage chairs.

July 9, 1776, *continued.*

Treasurer's office, a desk, and a grate, and a lock and key.

CANDLE ROOM.

A grate, and a lock and key.
A long table out of order.
An old chest.

SCENES.

A drop wood.
A drop palace.
A town flat.
Three chambers, *holes in one of them,* the doors of the door-chamber very bad.
Prison.
Canal garden.
Blasted heath, Macbeth.
Grand tent.
Cut wood, Hamlet.
Cave with catacombs painted on the back.
Statue palace.
Gothic palace.
Garden.
Long wood, a *hole* in it.
Part of the hovel in the Sorcerer.

Tiled chamber.
Statue in Merope.
Back of the bower.
Patty's house, *very bad.*
Doctor's brick house, in Mercury Harlequin.
A small cut tree.
Front of the orchestra, catacombs on the back.
Map chamber out of repair.
Part of the bridge in King Arthur.
Rialto.
The Statue of Osiris.
Aimworth's house, one stile *broke.*
Palace arch.
Toy house.
Battlements, *torn.*
Garden wall, very bad.
Tomb in the Grecian Daughter.
Library.
An old Patagonian chamber in Mother Shipton.
Changeable flat in Mercury Harlequin.
Water-fall in the Dargle, *very bad.*
Cobb's house, outside.
Portico.
Statue arch in Mercury Harlequin, very bad.
Frost scene in King Arthur.
Inside of Cobb's house, *torn.*
Long wood.
Apothecary's shop in the Dargle, very bad.
Outside of the Miller's house, (brick work) one part.
Scene with sacks, one half.
Water-fall.
Scene of swords.
Two pieces of plain paling.
A small single tent.
Altarpiece in Theodosius.
Palace arch of Corinthian order.
Blue striped chamber.
Iron yard painting, almost defaced.
Garden arch.
Two large wood wings, *greatly damaged.*
One piece of clouding, very old and little worth.
Three pair of picture chamber wings.
Six pair of wood wings, long used.
Five pair of statue wings, one greatly damaged.
Five pair of Gothic wings (five holes in the canvass.)
One pair of Gothic wings, very bad and torn.
Five pair of town wings.
One sedan chair, No. 5. for the pantomime.
Three pair of striped chamber wings.

Two pair of marbled wings.
Two pair of bower wings, all in bad order.
Four pair of boat wings, the painting much damaged.
Two pair of marble palace wings, long used.
Two pair of back cloud wings.
One pair of back town and wood wings.
Two pair of rock wings.

July 12, 1776, *continued.*

Five small tents, used in the Fair, old.
A small cabin.
Temple in the Maid of the Mill (brick work.)
A Chinese Temple, old.
Juliet's balcony.
Outside of a Chinese temple in the Orphan of China.
Three small bower wings with hinges on them.
Balcony in the Suspicious Husband, old.
An old tree.
Two pair of wood frames for flats, not covered.
Padlock scene.
The bridge in King Arthur.
Two small trees.
A green stage cloth.
Juliet's bier.
Jobson's bed.
Five palace borders.
Five sky borders.
Mill house in the Maid of the Mill, torn very much.
Rostrum in Julius Cæsar.

July 22, 1776, *properties.*

Three pieces of black cloth.
Four gentlemen's turbans.
Six common ditto.
Three white hats.
Bow, quiver, and bonnet for Douglas!
Four gentlemen's *helmets.*
Five soldier's ditto.
Five forester's caps.
A small map, for Lear.
One shepherd's hat.
Four small paper tarts.
One green table cloth.
An old pedlar's box.
Four single chains.
One do. for the hall door.
Two green covers for stage forms.
One settee cover and two pillows.

One pair of double chains.
One white single do.
Seven spears.
Three ditto, broke.
Nine rods, one crook.
Two shapes.
One knife and fork in case.
An old toy fiddle.
One goblet.
Fribble's sword, very bad.
Five truncheons.
Edgar's hat.
Three pasteboard covers for dishes.
One pediment for banquet.
Six gentlemen's helmets.
Lantern in Grecian Daughter.
One pair of scissors.
One press with a lock and key to it.
Two shelves and four drawers in ditto.
One fixed table.
One large press with four doors.
Three shelves and nine drawers in ditto.
An old press with three shelves, the back broke, no doors.
One ditto without back or doors, one shelf.
One ditto with four shelves, pannel out of the back, with one door.
One ditto with one drawer, the back broke, with one door.
One large clothes chest, bound with iron, *no top.*
Three lesser chests, bound with iron, *all without tops.**
One form and two old chairs.
Two grates in the men's wardrobe.
Two pieces of scantling to hang clothes on.
Four very small racks to hang clothes on.

July 23, continued.

Twelve oak chairs, very good.
Six washing basins, one broke, four black pitchers.
Twenty-eight candlesticks for dressing.
Eleven metal thunder-bolts, sixty-seven wood ditto, five stone ditto.†
Three baskets for thunder balls.
One canopy.

* The *honesty* of the concern is beautifully proved by this mark of security—No *tops* to the chests for stage apparel!

† Here is great penury in most theatrical properties, except in the article of *thunder*. Eighty-three *hot* and *sulphurous* bolts, of metal, wood, and stone.

"Merciful Heavens! nothing *but* Thunder."

The pedestal and horse in the Sorcerer, out of repair.
Hob's well, two water wheels, boat in the Dargle.
Two sets of fly grooves with barrels.
Four long barrels with multiplying wheels.
Two short barrels not movable, curtain barrel.
Rack in Venice Preserved.
Elephant in the Enchanted Lady, very bad.
Alexander's car, some of it wanting.
The star King Arthur cut across.
Three pair of cut drapery drops with figures and back, made for the Enchanted Lady.
Midas's scaffold, and barrel, with balance weight.
One short barrel at the back of the stage.
One frame with three barrels, in the Carpenter's Gallery.
One pair of sea horses, two small barrels in the Carpenter's Gallery.
Two old scene barrels in Carpenter's Gallery.
A small ship curtain, two old trussels.
A flag and mullet for painters.
Five pair of arches and back in Mother Shipton.
Three pair of wings in Mother Shipton, changeable.

July 24, 1776, *continued.*

Four pair of small wheels, a back drop palace.
Six small traps with cords, no balance weights.
One grave trap with cords, no weight.
Two barrels under the stage not in use, with one ring only.
The scaffold in Venice Preserved, a small cabinet.
Four buckets, iron bound.
Total—twenty-four foot-lights.
Total—seventy-six wing-lights.
Several old pantomime tricks and useless pieces of scenes.

Sept. 28, 1776, THOMAS RYDER.

Left in the trunk in Mrs. Barry's room, at Crow-Street Theatre.

A black velvet dress and train.
A yellow and silver ditto.
A silver brocade ditto.
A Spanish blue and white thread satin ditto.
A pink coloured silk ditto.
A crimson thread satin ditto.
A Spanish green satin ditto.
A white satin ditto.
A puckered white thread satin petticoat.
A blue thread satin robe.
A white ditto.

Ten white linen dresses.
A brown poplin dress.
Seven shepherdesses' ditto.
Two stuff petticoats and a jacket.
A red puckered dress.
A white tread satin dress, covered with gauze.
Four dresses in Artaxerxes.
A pair of shepherd's breeches.*

* For the dear woman's own Rosalind, no doubt.

MR. KEMBLE'S WILL;

EXTRACTED FROM THE REGISTRY OF THE PREROGATIVE COURT OF CANTERBURY.

The last important act of existence is sometimes a melancholy record of our prejudices, and should, therefore, in charity, be veiled from the general gaze. In the case of MR. KEMBLE, *like every other meditated act of his life, it is honourable to his memory.*

The clearness of his intentions, or the intelligence of his friendly solicitor, seems, in his case, to have somewhat unclouded the mystery of legal expression, and it may be read by the unlearned without much difficulty, and even with considerable pleasure.

Among the provisions of MR. KEMBLE'S *will, there is no lurking vanity, pressing in by idle legacies upon the recollections of the great. All that he had is given exactly where it should be given; and the aids that he had rendered silently during his life are solicitously continued by him during the existence of the parties.*

That the public might have an authentic copy of this interesting document, I requested my proctor to obtain the extract from the Prerogative Registry of Canterbury, and cheerfully paid the serious stamp duty attending the transcript.

THIS IS THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT of me, JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE, late of Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, and at present residing in Argyle Street, in the county of Middlesex, Esquire, made the twenty-second day of November, in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and twenty, in manner following; that is to say, I do give, devise, and bequeath unto my most excellent and beloved wife, Priscilla Kemble, her executors, administrators, and assigns, all that annuity or clear yearly rent-charge of One thousand Pounds sterling, which hath been granted, and now stands secured to be paid and payable to me, my executors, administrators, and assigns, for and during

the lives of myself and her my said wife Priscilla, and the life of the survivor, in and by certain indentures of lease and release, bearing date respectively the thirty-first day of July and first day of August, in the year One thousand eight hundred and seventeen, and made between John George Lambton, of Lambton, in the county of Durham, Esquire, of the first part, myself of the second part, and John Griffiths, of the city of Durham, gentleman, (a trusteee on my part) of the third part; and in and by a warrant of attorney, bearing even date with the said indenture of release, under the hand and seal of the said John George Lambton, for confessing judgment against him at my suit for the sum of Twenty thousand Pounds sterling and costs: And also in and by an indenture bearing even date with the said Indenture of release, and made between the said John George Lambton of the first part, myself of the second part, and John Gregson, of the said city of Durham, gentleman, of the third part; whereby the said John Gregson is appointed receiver of the rents and profits of the hereditaments and premises comprised in the said indentures of lease and release, to act therein in case the said yearly rent charge should not be paid as therein mentioned: And all my estate, right, title, and interest, trust, property, possession, claim, and demand whatsoever, of, in, and to the said yearly rent charge, and all powers and remedies for recovery thereof, together with the said several Indentures of lease and release and appointment: And the said warrant of attorney and judgment to be entered up thereupon, and all other securities for the same rent charge, to have, hold, receive, and take the said yearly rent charge of One thousand Pounds and premises, unto and by my said wife Priscilla Kemble, her executors, administrators, and assigns, to and for her and their own use and benefit absolutely. I do give and bequeath unto my said wife Priscilla all my household goods and furniture, books, plate, linen, woollen, and china, to and for her own use absolutely. I give and bequeath unto my sister, Mrs. Ann Hatton, of the town of Swansea, in the county of Glamorgan, and her assigns, for and during her life, one clear annuity or yearly sum of Sixty Pounds sterling. And unto my sister Mrs. Jane Mason, of Edinburgh, and her assigns, for and during her life, one clear annuity or yearly sum of Twenty Pounds sterling. And I do direct that both the said annuities of sixty pounds and twenty pounds, whilst respectively subsisting, shall be punctually paid out of the residue of my personal estate, free and clear of and from the legacy or annuity tax or duty for the time being, and all other taxes, duties, and deductions whatsoever, by four equal quarterly payments, on the twenty-fifth day of March, the twenty-fourth day of June, the twenty-ninth day of September, and the twenty-fifth day of December, in every year; the first quarterly payment thereof respectively to be made on such of those days as shall next happen after my decease.

and a proportional part of each annuity to be paid to the executors or administrators of each annuitant up to the day of her decease. And as to, for, and concerning all other my goods, chattels, stocks, funds, and moneys, due and owing unto me, and other moneys and securities for money, debts, and all other my personal estate whatsoever and wheresoever, not hereinbefore by me given or otherwise disposed of, (subject, however in the first place to the payment of my just debts and funeral expenses, the charges of proving and executing this my Will, and to such legacies as I may give by any codicil or codicils hereto,) I do give and bequeath the same and every part thereof respectively unto my said dear wife Priscilla Kemble and my dear brother Charles Kemble, Esquire, upon trust, that they shall and do, as soon as conveniently may be after my decease, sell and convert into money all such parts thereof as shall not consist of money, or securities for money, and shall and do call in and receive and collect all such parts thereof as consist of money and securities for money, and debts owing unto me; and shall and do, with all convenient speed thereupon, lay out and invest the moneys arising by the sale and conversion into money of such part of the residue of my said personal estate, as shall not consist of money, or securities for money, and the moneys which shall be so called in. And all other the said residue of my personal estate, after and subject as aforesaid, in the purchase, from time to time, of Bank Three Pounds per cent. Annuities, in the names of them my said wife and brother, and of two other proper persons to be mutually chosen by them; and my Will is, and I do hereby direct, that they my said wife and brother, and such two persons so to be mutually chosen, and the survivors and survivor of them, his executors and administrators, shall and do stand and be possessed of and interested in the said Bank Three Pounds per cent. Annuities so to be purchased, in trust, out of the interest or dividends thereof to pay the said two life annuities, while respectively subsisting, as hereinbefore directed; and to pay unto or permit or authorize my said wife Priscilla, and her assigns, to receive all the surplus or remainder of the said interest or dividends, for and during her life, to and for her and their own use and benefit. And from and immediately after her decease, upon trust, to sell and transfer so much of the said Bank Three Pounds per cent. Annuities, as, after payment of brokerage on such sale, shall produce the clear sum of Four thousand Pounds sterling, and do pay the same sum unto such person or persons, and in such shares and proportions as she my said wife shall, in and by her last Will and Testament, to be duly signed and published by her in the presence of and to be attested by two credible witnesses, shall direct or appoint, or give and bequeath the said sum of four thousand pounds: And subject to such direction or appointment, gift or bequest, if any shall be so made as aforesaid, and also subject to the payment of the said two life

annuities, while respectively subsisting, I do give and bequeath the remainder or the whole of the said Bank Three Pounds per cent. Annuities, as the case may be, unto my said brother Charles Kemble, his executors, administrators, and assigns, to and for his and their use and benefit; and do direct such Bank Annuities to be transferred unto him or them accordingly, freed and discharged of and from all other trusts then as to the payment of the said two life annuities while respectively subsisting. And I do hereby nominate and appoint my said wife Priscilla Kemble and my said brother Charles Kemble, to be Executrix and Executor of this my Will: Provided always, and I do hereby further declare my Will to be, that it shall and may be lawful to and for my said Trustees and Executors acting under this my Will, respectively, and their respective heirs, executors, and administrators, by and out of all or any of the moneys which, by virtue of this my Will or any of the trusts herein declared, shall come to their or any of their hands, to deduct, and retain, to, and reimburse themselves respectively; and also to allow to their respective co-trustees and executors, their respective heirs, executors, and administrators, all such costs, charges, damages, and expenses as they respectively shall or may sustain, incur, or be put unto, in or about the execution of the several trusts hereby in them respectively reposed, or any of them, or of this my Will. And also that the said trustees and executors respectively, their respective heirs, executors, and administrators, shall be charged and chargeable only, each and every of them, for and with his, her, and their respective receipts, payments, acts, and wilful defaults, and not otherwise; and shall not be charged or chargeable with or for any sum or sums of money, other than such as shall actually come to their respective hands by virtue of this my Will, the joining in receipts for form's sake notwithstanding. And that no trustee of this my Will, paying or consenting to the payment of money to a co-trustee thereof, with a bonâ fide intent to accelerate the performance of the trusts thereof, shall be responsible for the conduct or misconduct of the trustee receiving the same, nor be answerable for his or her application or misapplication of such money; nor shall any such trustees be charged or chargeable with or for any loss or damage which shall or may happen, in or about the execution of the several trusts hereby in them respectively reposed, or of this my Will, without their respective wilful default. And lastly, hereby revoking all former and other Wills and Codicils by me at any time heretofore made, I do declare this to be my last Will and Testament. In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand, and I have executed, or intend to execute, a duplicate hereof in like manner, the day and year first before written.

J. P. KEMBLE.

The Writing contained in this sheet of paper was signed by the said John Philip Kemble, the testator, and by him published as and for, and declared to be his last Will and Testament, in the presence of us, who, at his request, in his presence, and that of each other, have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses to such signing and publishing.

ALEXANDER MURRAY, of Symond's Inn.
WILLIAM WOODHOUSE, } Clerks to Mr. Murray.
HENRY BURGH, }

PROVED at LONDON, 26th April, 1823, before the Worshipful Jesse Addams, Doctor of Laws and Surrogate, by the oaths of Priscilla Kemble, widow, the relict, and Charles Kemble, Esquire, the brother, the Executors, to whom Administration was granted, being first sworn duly to administer.

NATHANIEL GOSTLIND,
R. C. CRESSWELL, } Deputy Registers.
TER. JENNER, }

THE END.